



WOMEN MEDIATORS: BRIDGING THE PEACE GAP

Report



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Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC) was established in 2018 and brings together women from different backgrounds and with different experiences of mediating conflict to learn from each other. The network advocates for greater recognition of the crucial work done by women mediators at all levels – from the local to the global. WMC is part of the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks.

For further details on the network and its members visit: <https://www.c-r.org/programme/wmc>

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SUMMARY AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The creation of women’s mediator networks has been a global response to the persistent under-representation of women in peace and security. Responding to the failure to make meaningful progress towards the goals of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), the networks provide a platform to increase the visibility of women mediators and peacebuilders regionally and internationally in line with the commitments made in UNSCR 1325 to increase the participation of women in peace and security.

The Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC) network was created in 2018. Hosted by Conciliation Resources with funding from the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, WMC brings together diverse groups of women mediators and peacebuilders from across the Commonwealth to showcase their work. The network enables the sharing of good practice and thematic expertise through network meetings and the creation of peer-to-peer learning opportunities and knowledge exchange, supporting women across different mediation spaces and geographical areas and amplifying the voices of women mediators to international audiences.

This report presents the work of the WMC members and highlights the diversity of contributions that women mediators have made to peace in their own communities and countries, as well as regionally and internationally. It also showcases the variety of skills that women bring to mediation, and the ways in which they approach their work.

In particular, it highlights the sustainable nature of women’s mediation work and how it contributes not only to formal processes of conflict resolution, but also to the long-term work of conflict prevention.

In spite of the evidence that the work of women mediators benefits peace and security across the Commonwealth, women still face structural barriers to their participation in mediation. Women mediators are not adequately recognised or supported in their work and continue to face discrimination and have to work much harder to be treated as equals.

This report analyses these barriers as experienced by WMC members, and presents a series of recommendations for international organisations, governments and civil society for supporting the work of women mediators as follows:

International organisations, including multilateral agencies and regional bodies

- a) Create mechanisms for women mediators and peacebuilders to apply their experiences and expertise beyond their contexts.
- b) Champion the role played by women mediators and provide strategic leadership for their value and recognition at all levels of mediation.
- c) Provide professional development and strategic support to enable women to move between the different mediation ‘spaces’ – from the local to national or national to regional/international.
- d) Create pathways for younger women mediators and women mediators who have been operating in different contexts to access careers in regional and international mediation and to participate in decision-making processes.



WMC members at the 2019 WMC all network meeting in London.
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Commonwealth Heads of State, national and local governments

- e) Provide high-level recognition and political support for women mediators.
- f) Create opportunities to engage women mediators in conflict prevention across the Commonwealth and beyond.
- g) Challenge attitudes that exclude women from mediation and peacebuilding roles.

National and local governments

- h) Work collaboratively with women mediators to deliver sustainable conflict prevention and peacebuilding locally and regionally.
- i) Create and target accessible funding for women mediators to engage in peacebuilding programmes with hard to reach communities, including youth.

Local civil society organisations

- j) Develop 'Train the Trainer' programmes to support women mediators to enable others to develop their skills.
- k) Provide mentoring and career opportunities that enable younger mediators, and mediators moving between spaces, to work with and understudy mediators already established in the field.
- l) Build collaborative relationships with other organisations to increase the sustainability of interventions.

Recommendation for all stakeholders

- m) Ensure sustainable long-term funding for women mediators and the initiatives they design and run.

INTRODUCTION

Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC) network was launched in July 2018. It brings together women mediators and peacebuilders from across the Commonwealth – connecting 49 members from 22 different countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Americas, Europe and the Pacific. The creation of WMC was a response to the persistently low representation of women in peace processes globally.

Twenty years since the landmark UNSCR 1325 recognised the importance of women's participation in peace and security efforts, the number of women involved in formal peace processes remains low.¹ In addition to their exclusion from formal processes, it is often the case that the mediation and peacebuilding work that women do at the local level is not recognised. This makes women all the more invisible in peace and security. Not only are they absent from formal peace processes, but their contributions to local level peace initiatives are ignored.²

The creation of the WMC network is a response to this invisibility and the failure to recognise the contribution that women make to peace. It is one of a number of similar initiatives that have sought to make women mediators more visible and to amplify the voices of women peacebuilders globally.

The Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks, launched in 2019, includes the Nordic Women Mediators network,³

Mediterranean Women Mediators Network⁴ and FemWise Africa.⁵ Other mechanisms, such as the ASEAN Women for Peace Registry⁶ and the Arab Women Mediators Network⁷ are also in the processes of development. The networks provide platforms to showcase the work of women from different geographic regions who are actively engaged in mediation and peacebuilding, whether in the local, national, regional or international context.

In this regard they are intended to advance progress towards the fulfilment of the international commitments made in UNSCR 1325 to increase the participation and decision-making of women in global peace and security efforts. However, beyond the commitments made in UNSCR 1325 and the subsequent nine further resolutions,⁸ the networks also recognise the need to amplify the voices of women mediators and to showcase the important mediation and peacebuilding work that is done by women in all spaces, including the vital work that is carried out formally and informally at the national and local level. WMC members have mediation experience ranging from mediating conflict within communities, to formally mediating conflicts on the margins of official peace processes.

WMC offers support to women peacebuilders and mediators through channelling, formalising and coordinating efforts to enable their participation in mediation and peacebuilding processes. Through a series of activities such as peer-to-peer learning, mentoring, mediation skills trainings and network development meetings, WMC brings together experienced mediators from a range of diverse backgrounds for the sharing of



lessons learned and best practices. These efforts have increased solidarity among women peacebuilders and mediators. WMC also engages strategically to develop synergies with other networks and mediation bodies with the aim of enhancing advocacy work on behalf of women mediators and connecting them with key institutions and organisations in the mediation field.

This report draws on a series of semi-structured interviews and focus group conversations conducted by Conciliation Resources between 2018 and 2020 with WMC members. A list of the women who contributed significantly to this research is included at the end of the report (see Appendix 1). The findings of the research demonstrate the diversity of the mediation roles that women fulfil, how their work contributes to broader peace and security agendas, and the challenges they face in their role.

The report makes reference to the prevailing terminology of ‘multi-track mediation’,⁹ noting the limitations of this concept. Conversations with WMC members revealed that the distinction between the levels is not always clear cut and there are many ways in which levels intersect and are connected in practice.¹⁰

Ultimately the report demonstrates the restrictions of the multi-track model by revealing the fluidity of the work of women mediators – work that is not constrained by formal ‘track’ definitions. The experience of WMC members demonstrates that the contribution that women mediators make to peace and security extends far beyond narrow definitions of ‘participation’ under the WPS agenda. Women’s contributions are reshaping how we understand conflict and our response to it.

WOMEN MEDIATORS: WHAT DO THEY DO?

Efforts to increase the participation of women in peace processes have been framed by the normative agenda of Women, Peace and Security (WPS).¹¹ This has resulted in a focus on the inclusion of greater numbers of women in 'high-level' formal peace processes. What the experience of WMC demonstrates is that while there is a need to continue to increase the representation of women in 'high-level' formal peace processes, these are only one of a diverse range of spaces in which women are active in mediation and peacebuilding.

WMC brings together women who have experience of 'high-level' formal and informal mediation with women who work predominantly at national or local level, to share in mediation strategies and engage in peer-to-peer reflection and learning. This provides a rich range of examples of the type of work that women mediators are engaged in, and the spaces and contexts in which they operate.

WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL MEDIATION

Members of WMC have been actively engaged with regional and international organisations to support peace and security initiatives. In the West Africa region, Barbara Sangare (Bangura), as International Coordinator of the Women's Situation Room (WSR) for Peaceful Elections,

has worked with regional agencies such as ECOWAS and international elections observation missions to reduce election-related violence. These interventions have proved effective as women have been able to access and mediate between conflicting political parties in a number of different countries whose governments have signed but not respected election codes of conduct, triggering disturbances and violence that endangers the peace and security of their countries.¹² Other members have played key roles in formal political talks. In Uganda, WMC member Betty Bigombe acted as lead mediator in talks between the Ugandan government and the LRA in the mid-2000s.¹³ Emma Leslie was a member of the International Contact Group that supported talks between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).¹⁴

Several members have had professional roles supporting mediation processes on behalf of the United Nations, such as Sanam Anderlini who was appointed as the first Senior Advisor for Gender and Inclusion when the UN Standby Team of Mediation Experts was established in 2012. In this role she supported peace processes in Somalia, Libya and Syria.¹⁵ Elizabeth Solomon from the Caribbean worked in support of peace efforts in Cyprus as a member of the mediation team of the United Nations Secretary-General's Good Offices Mission, and as a Peace and Development Advisor for the UN in Sierra Leone.¹⁶ In each of these roles women have brought their skills and expertise into 'high-level' political talks and decision making.

WOMEN IN NATIONAL MEDIATION

The work of women mediators crosses a number of different aspects of mediation, including different levels, spaces and areas of thematic expertise. Mediation led by WMC members has resulted in policy interventions to address the causes and consequences of conflict at the national level. In northeast Nigeria, Lantana Bako Abdullahi worked with communities and government on issues of access to infrastructure. This included working with the government and farmers/herdsmen to create a policy framework to resolve access to land, water and pasture for both farmers and herders. As such it addressed intractable conflict between farmers and herders that created instability in the region.¹⁷

Salma Yusuf, WMC member from Sri Lanka, led the drafting and process development of Sri Lanka's first ever National Policy on Reconciliation and Coexistence, which became one of the first to be adopted in the Asian region. She designed an extensive consultation strategy that created safe spaces for dialogue and sharing of grievances and aspirations among multiple stakeholders ranging from government officials to civil society representatives, and which included women, youth, academia, the media and victim representatives. This process led to the creation of a framework of shared positions and solutions for the country's journey towards reconciliation. Furthermore, she led the design of an implementation strategy and the development of institutional infrastructure and coordination mechanisms to implement the National Policy on Reconciliation.

Other examples of women's mediation nationally include facilitating dialogue between communities and authorities on the reintegration of ex-combatants into communities,¹⁸ initiatives aimed at preventing radicalisation among youth,¹⁹ and engaging on questions of gender equality.²⁰

WOMEN IN LOCAL MEDIATION

While women are underrepresented in international mediation, in relative terms there tend to be more women active in local mediation.²¹ The experience of WMC members demonstrates the diverse and critical nature of the mediation work that women undertake within their own communities.

In Fiji, Florence Swami worked with a community who were extremely concerned over the lack of support and service delivery from the government in relation to the supply of clean water, adequate road access to markets and schools, substance abuse and unemployment issues. Her work began initially with helping the multi-ethnic community identify their needs and address internal conflicts. This process assisted community members to put aside racial and ethnic concerns and focus on issues of common concern. Further mediation was then offered to bring community representatives together with government representatives to discuss the needs of the community. The mediation resulted in agreement on how these issues would be managed.²²

In Nigeria, Lantana Bako Abdullahi mediated conflict in an interreligious community. Violence flared over the right of passage and access to a road where a Christian wanted to pass where Muslims were praying. Many were killed and displaced during this violence. As part of the peacebuilding effort people were starting to rebuild their community and homes, while in the middle of the night others were dismantling the building work. Women mediators engaged in a lengthy mediation process to address these attacks and stop the interreligious violence in the community.²³

In Australia, Indigenous women mediators in some central desert communities use mediation as a restorative justice tool, to re-establish kinship protocols and as an intervention strategy to manage conflict and limit police and criminal justice contact.²⁴

Often the work of women mediators deals with familial disputes over land or inheritance,²⁵ disputes between local religious groups or tribes where conflict has the potential to become politicised or spill over into neighbouring areas, and helping communities address the legacy of trauma from conflict.²⁶ Women mediators are addressing the types of conflict that are invisible to or excluded from international mediation practice, but which are nevertheless potentially destabilising.

CONNECTING THE SPACES FOR MEDIATION

Several WMC members operate across different spaces and do not distinguish between their role in each. Conflict in communities can easily escalate into violence that risks wider destabilisation. Tensions in one community can easily spill over to the wider region and across a state. Women mediators work across these administrative or geographic boundaries and open up channels for communication between them, highlighting the connections between local conflict resolution and regional or international peace and security efforts.

BOX 1: FORMAL AND INFORMAL MEDIATION

In the language of multi-track mediation, the terminology of 'formal' and 'informal' mediation is often confused. 'High-level' political processes tend to be conflated with 'formal' processes, while local processes are conflated with 'informal' processes. In practice, the distinction between the two is not clear cut. Processes at the 'high-level' can be conducted on an informal basis, while processes happening at the local level and within community spaces can be very formal.

The distinction between the two often rests on two issues:

- a) who has convened the talks; and
- b) the purpose or intended outcome of that convening.

As an example, a process organised by a peacebuilding NGO that brings together high-ranking political or military figures for discrete talks can be informal, while still involving high-level participants. The outcome of the talks is unlikely to be a legally binding or publicly available agreement document.

A process convened by a UN body and supported by UN personnel in a remote community, conducted at a local level and involving community participants, may still be formal; likewise for a process conducted between a community or group of communities and involving local government representatives. In these cases, the intended outcome may be a binding agreement on conflict resolution at the local level.

Ultimately the meaning of the terms is not fixed and depends on the context, who is using the language and for what purpose the conflicting parties are being brought together.

CASE STUDY

BARBARA SANGARE (BANGURA)

Mediator, Sierra Leone

Barbara Sangare (Bangura) is a mediator from Sierra Leone. She is the founder of an NGO that worked on reintegrating and rehabilitating women and girls who have suffered atrocities during the war, both as perpetrators and survivors. Her work to successfully reintegrate women after war requires not only working with women themselves but also addressing the continuing stigma against women in the community. Working in depressed and over-populated communities plunged Barbara head on into mediation and she became a mediator by default, with no formal training and very little experience. She worked against a backdrop of constant conflict and sometimes violence as individuals and families accused each other of being rebels or collaborators, destabilising the peace and security of their communities and the fragile peace that existed nationwide.

In 2001/2002 she mediated the reintegration of 23 ex-combatants into their communities after the 12-year rebel war. There were few women willing to go into communities that had been rebel strongholds and were still considered dangerous after the war. Barbara facilitated a peacebuilding workshop for the rebels and the civil militia in Makeni town, in what was considered a no-go area as it was held by the rebels. This made her stand out as courageous and patriotic, enabling her to access the warring factions and gain the trust of community members. She used this position of trust to expand her work, establishing processes of dialogue between rebel groups and local communities in other regions, training other women in mediation, and developing local networks of women mediators. She was also able to access training opportunities from organisations including the UN to build her own skills.



© Barbara Sangare (Bangura)

During the official handover of the last rebel stronghold in Sierra Leone in 2002, Barbara was invited by the UN to chair the handover ceremony in the Northern region of the country. As testimony to her success as a mediator, at the end of the ceremony the rebels insisted she sit in on their roundtable discussions with the head of the UN Peacekeeping Mission and his team. Her work over the years has allowed her access to key individuals and groups, starting at the community level, where she became visible as a trusted and competent mediator and peace activist, and gradually gained recognition at the national and, later, the regional level. Since then, she has continued to train other women and build the network of women mediators in communities and at the national and regional levels. Between 2012 and 2018, as International Coordinator of the Women's Situation Room (WSR) for Peaceful Elections, she worked with ECOWAS to mediate election-related conflict and violence in the region.

WOMEN MEDIATORS: HOW DO THEY OPERATE?

The definition of mediation is well established. Key features – such as the role of the mediator as an impartial third party who assists the parties, with their consent, to move towards a mutually acceptable outcome – are core elements of the practice of WMC members.²⁷ However, beyond the commonly accepted features of mediation, WMC members revealed a diverse range of skills and approaches that they build on to help in their work. There is a clear emphasis on collaborative working and the importance of developing relationships of trust and confidence to enable them to successfully mediate conflict.

LEADERSHIP

Women mediators demonstrate remarkable leadership in their approach to mediation. Where conflict arises, particularly in informal spaces, women often do not wait to be invited to intervene.²⁸ They are proactive in identifying the issues causing the conflict and offering assistance to address them. For many women the decision to intervene is made even without having had any formal training or formal mediation skills.²⁹

Women's informal interventions usually begin in the community. Women mediators have their fingers on the pulse of the community; they see and understand conflict and are driven to address it to prevent it from escalating.

To do this they reach out to others in the community, including leaders and elders who have the power to influence others.³⁰ This enables them to establish the consent of parties to be involved in an inclusive process of mediation or dialogue.³¹ It also begins a longer process of building relationships and trust with parties – a process that characterises the work of women mediators.³²

“I thought out of the box and was strategic in proposing a deal with both parties based on their interests – the ex-combatants wanted to return home, marry and settle down, while the townspeople needed reconstruction, healing and cleansing. Thus with the support of the international NGO, national NGOs and other donors everyone benefited at the end of the day.”³³

For women, mediation is not a clearly defined or linear process in which agreement is the only goal. Rather, it is a process of sustained dialogue with many and diverse stakeholders that unfolds over a lengthy period of time.

“Mediation is facilitating a number of stakeholders at different levels moving towards the same shared vision and values and principles that might end a violent conflict.”³⁴

SUSTAINED DIALOGUE EFFORTS

The experience of WMC members highlights the concern of women mediators for relationship building and seeing the bigger picture.³⁵ Women live in conflict-affected communities and they see the consequences of violence in the long term.³⁶ For WMC mediators the single biggest factor in their success was their ability to build and maintain relationships of trust with affected communities. They draw on skills such as empathy and active listening to establish trust with conflict parties and wider communities. This in turn ensures an ongoing relationship with the key stakeholders that keeps communication open.

In northern Nigeria, Lantana Bako Abdullahi has been involved in a long-term process of dialogue between rural communities and the government to address contentious issues such as the reintegration of ex-combatants, and policies directed at preventing violent extremism.³⁷ This process depends on a commitment to supporting ongoing community dialogue.

A long-term approach to mediation is particularly key for women mediators, who have to work hard to establish their credibility as mediators. It is often only after a sustained period of engagement and mediation that women are accepted in the role of mediator and that elders and religious leaders will agree to work with them.³⁸ To establish these relationships of trust with communities, women mediators emphasise the importance of being sensitive to context and working with and alongside cultural and religious norms. Sometimes this means drawing on aspects of their own identities – such as faith or ethnic identity – that connect them to the parties. Other times it means emphasising their role as an impartial party without a stake in the outcome,³⁹ always being ready to adapt to the situation with which they are presented.

CONNECTIONS TO COMMUNITIES

The connection between women mediators and affected communities helps to build their credibility as trusted intermediaries.

“You can’t go into mediation straight away. You have to establish contact and build relations with communities first, to connect with the community and to stand and share in their pains.”⁴⁰

Building trust with communities takes a number of forms. It includes women working within or reviving traditional forms of conflict resolution that are familiar to communities.⁴¹ It also requires familiarity with local religious and cultural norms that may act as barriers to effective communication or understanding.

In Australia, Helen Bishop works with Indigenous women (and men) in the communities of the Northern Territory to amplify their own systems of peacemaking by exploring traditional methods and using their own languages to describe such processes.⁴²

WMC members in Australia, Bougainville, Fiji, Indian-administered Kashmir, and Pakistan have all used traditional or religious conflict resolution practices to mediate community-based conflict, enhancing their credibility with the community.

“Restorative justice in the community context is important as it aligns quite closely to traditional practices such as ‘talanoa’ and ‘bulubulu’ – traditional dialogue, mediation and forgiveness-seeking spaces. This is not an excuse not to follow the law, that will take its course; but after this there is recognition that a harm has been done to the community which must be put right.”⁴³

Being attuned and sensitive to local community values is achieved by adopting an inclusive approach to their mediation. WMC members emphasised the importance of inclusion for their work, and the need to reach out and listen to as wide a range of views as possible to ensure the credibility of the process.

Women mediators' knowledge of the community is also an asset when it comes to facilitating dialogue between communities and governments. In Pakistan, being in a position of trust within the community enabled a WMC member to mediate between government forces and the community because the government forces were able to trust her position as an impartial intermediary.⁴⁴

The trust and credibility that built up over decades of work gave her access to both government and armed groups and allowed her to work as a mediator.

“It was because of my repute in the communities that I was working in that I was taken seriously by the government and that gave me access to the government as well as to the extremist groups.”⁴⁵

The ability to build bridges is a key part of the work of women mediators. These could be bridges within communities, helping to establish communication between groups; for example, between women or youth and local elders or religious leaders. They could also be bridges between communities and government institutions. In societies that have suffered conflict there is often deep distrust between local communities and the state. The ability to bring the voice of the community to the government, and to have the government listen, is a crucial mechanism to identify and address early warning signs of conflict. Women mediators are able to work between these spaces.

“I understand those institutional processes and so am able to design community level work anticipating how it could look if a government stakeholder were to be involved.”⁴⁶

COLLABORATION

Women mediators in the network emphasise collaboration as central to their approach to mediation practice. They seek to reach out and build networks with other organisations – whether locally, nationally, regionally or internationally – to support their work.

“My membership in various peacebuilding networks also enabled me access to resources for doing mediation and I am a firm believer in collaboration and partnerships in order to manage resources and get the job done.”⁴⁷

They also focus on empowering and developing other women to play mediation roles. This is part of a long-term approach to mediation that emphasises the importance of sustainability and ensuring that the community has the tools to manage their own conflicts.

CASE STUDY

FLORENCE SWAMI

Mediator, Fiji

© Florence Swami



Florence Swami is a mediator from Fiji. She works with rural communities to address issues that could give rise to conflict and violence, both within communities and between communities and local authorities. She has a particular focus on working with rural women, supporting them to access services and providing them with safe spaces to voice their concerns around gender-based violence, the processes of reporting and follow-up support. A key part of this work is creating spaces to empower rural women to engage in formal decision-making processes. Increasingly, her work in communities is also encouraging women to voice their issues and concerns on climate change and to amplify the specific challenges this brings for women related to relocation, identity and economic empowerment.

A central feature of Florence's work is collaboration. She focuses on working with local customs and traditions, and with diverse partners, to deliver peaceful change. These partners include church and other faith-based organisations such as the Pacific Conference of Churches and Interfaith Search Fiji, who are influential in the Pacific region. She also works closely with other peacebuilding organisations that offer complementary practices such as counselling, training, facilitation, mediation, research and reporting. This work is done in collaboration with civil society organisations; marginalised groups such as rural communities, women and youth; community-based associations, community leaders and national authorities.

Engaging with a collaborative approach to mediation enables Florence to build bridges and open dialogue between local communities and government authorities. In her work she engages with government departments including the Ministry of Women, Police Force, Corrections Service and Ministry of Education to reduce violence against women and children, encourage the use of nonviolence in criminal justice and the reintegration of offenders, and build peacebuilding principles into the educational curriculum in Fiji.

Through her mediation work Florence and her partners have empowered a multi-ethnic community to resolve common disputes non-violently, take ownership of their issues, and negotiate areas of potential conflict with government, resulting in the nonviolent resolution of grievances.

WHAT EFFECT DOES THIS WORK HAVE?

PREVENTING CONFLICT ESCALATION

One important but often overlooked effect of the work of women mediators is its capacity to prevent violence. The commitment to sustained dialogue efforts that WMC members employ when working with communities can address and prevent conflict, which if left unresolved has the potential to become politicised, spread beyond the community and ultimately turn violent.

The potential for local conflict to escalate to national level is significant.⁴⁸ Issues that arise relating to ethnicity, religion or economic inequalities may start within a small community,

but may be exasperated due to the migration of people for business or other economic purposes, or challenges related to climate change and environmental degradation, which may even extend across national borders.

The work of women mediators within communities is vital in preventing the spread and escalation of conflict. In Malawi the work of Mable Chawinga has prevented tensions between local leaders around the conduct of elections from escalating into inter-group conflict and violence. In the case of one town in Sierra Leone, the process of mediation and facilitated dialogue enabled the reintegration of ex-combatants into their communities.

LASTING IMPACT BEYOND THE INITIAL PROCESS



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In northern Nigeria conflict arose in a community in the heart of the city of Jos which is shared by Muslims and Christians. Due to its central location, violence in this community risked extending to the whole city and escalating further to the whole state.

In 2012 **Lantana Bako Abdullahi** led a mediation and dialogue process involving the two main religious communities, lawyers and traditional leaders to try to resolve the land-related conflict. At that time no agreement was signed, but there was no further violence in the community for three years following the process.

In 2016 Lantana received a call from youth representatives of the community asking her to come back and talk about the agreement. They wanted to get a written commitment and were now ready. She learned then that most of the agreement had been implemented. The process was successful because of the relationship building and strategies that were put in place to enable the community to manage their own conflict without resorting to violence. The impact of the work conducted several years previously had been sustained without her knowledge until that day.



Peace dialogues at the Women Leaders Forum in Bougainville, facilitated by WMC members
© Barbara Tanne

The communities had refused the reintegration of ex-combatants, who were all youth and who had allegedly led other rebels into the town where atrocities were perpetrated against the people. The communities believed that their own children had betrayed them. As a result, members of the community had threatened to kill the ex-combatants if they returned. A process of mediation and dialogue between the community and the ex-combatants eventually led to their successful reintegration.⁴⁹

“There were constant conflicts and some-times violence, particularly in disadvantaged communities where I worked, as individuals and families accused each other of being rebels or collaborators thus destabilising the peace and security of their communities and the fragile peace that existed nationwide.”⁵⁰

By addressing conflict within a community, or between a community and the government, women mediators are playing a vital role in conflict prevention.

SUPPORTING LONG-TERM SOCIAL COHESION

Another feature of the work of WMC members is that they seek not only to reach agreement in specific conflicts, but to build long-term social cohesion. This means supporting community members to empower themselves to use conflict management within their own communities or institutions.

“We acknowledge the power of the local knowledge and the local people so people can become owners of the mediation process.”⁵¹

In Bougainville, Barbara Tanne has offered training to local youth to manage conflict. The youth have been engaged in peer-to-peer learning, enabling women and men to sit together and learn from each other, as well as talking in their own groups. The training instilled a sense of community cohesion that enabled them to work together in the run-up to the referendum when tensions were high. The training and support given to communities also helped reduce the levels of fighting and drinking.⁵²

In Nigeria the work of Justina Mike Ngwobia enabled women from Christian and Muslim communities to work together. Mediation and training empowered Christian and Muslim women to speak to each other and to community leaders about working together. The women, who lived in polarised communities as a result of the violent conflict, started visiting each other and working together. They began mediating in their own communities, and settled cases between community leaders as well as young people who were engaging in violent behaviours, drug addiction and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).⁵³

“The women visited the communities together and visited community leaders and up until this day they are still doing it. What the women were doing was also an eye-opener for the communities when they realised what could be achieved.”⁵⁴

In Malawi, Mable Chawinga helped bridge the relationship between the police and community. This reduced the number of cases of mob justice, and increased the number of requests for dialogue whenever the community was not satisfied with security issues in their area. Overall, by enabling the community to address their own conflicts, her efforts increased community participation in security matters and reduced the potential for conflict, which was often exacerbated by slow court proceedings.⁵⁵

SHIFTING ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN

In addition to building long-term capacity for conflict management and prevention within communities, the work of women mediators also plays an important role in challenging attitudes towards women’s rights and roles. Women mediators have been able to promote the value of having women in decision-making and leadership positions from which they would traditionally have been excluded.

In Nigeria, Lantana Bako Abdullahi has worked with women and traditional leaders to help women secure leadership and decision-making positions within the community. This was done by working collaboratively with UN Women to mentor the women in issues such as conflict resolution and leadership, while engaging in advocacy work with traditional leaders to help them better understand the contribution that women could make.

“Our role as UN Women lead mentors focused on the mentoring, coaching, training and advocacy for the women and inviting traditional leaders to see what the women were doing and what their contribution was.”⁵⁶

Women mediators have also been able to raise sensitive issues related to SGBV against women and girls, and the rights and interests of women in conflict and post-conflict environments. In Indian-administered Kashmir, Ezabir Ali worked with religious leaders and community elders to address the rights and interests of women widowed as a result of conflict. Through a sustained process of engagement and dialogue the attitudes of the elders towards women’s rights were significantly altered.

CASE STUDY

EZABIR ALI

Mediator, Indian-administered Kashmir

Ezabir Ali is a mediator from Indian-administered Kashmir. She is the Founder and Secretary of a civil society organisation, EHSAAS, that works on gender and women's rights. One of the successes of Ezabir's work has been to secure recognition for the rights of 'half-widows' in Kashmir. It is estimated that as a result of the conflict in Kashmir around 8,000 men have disappeared but are not yet declared dead. With no idea if their husbands are dead or alive, around 1,500 women have been left as half-widows – stuck in a permanent state of limbo.

Ezabir mediated between the half-widows and the religious elders – the Ulema – to secure rights for women. This was a challenging process as the issue under discussion was of a very sensitive nature, concerning jurisprudence and Islamic or Sharia law. Under Sharia law a half-widow must wait a number of years before remarrying. The time limits differ between sects, but range from 4 years to 90 years. During this period, women live with significant legal restrictions on their lives and freedoms.

Initially the Ulema were not open to changing the law. However, through a process of sustained engagement with the Ulema, Ezabir gained the opportunity to mediate between the half-widows and Ulema. As a result of this mediation, religious leaders from various Islamic schools of thoughts agreed to articulate



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an edict on the period of 'wait' for remarriage of a half-widow. The consensus statement, or edict, reduced the wait period to only 4 years, after which time half-widows now have the right to remarry if they choose to do so.

Mediation has gradually helped to shift the Ulema's understanding of the challenges faced by half-widows and increased the recognition of their rights, leading to a change in local religious doctrine which now supports greater guarantee for the legal status, property and inheritance rights of half-widows.



CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR WOMEN'S SELF-EMPOWERMENT

In addition to fostering community cohesion and building local capacity for conflict prevention and management, the work of WMC members seeks to empower other women both to engage in community life and to act as mediators in their own communities.

“I feel that for us to have a greater impact it is vital for the funded peacebuilding and training programmes to be down-streamed to rural communities. Large numbers of women live in rural communities. Targeting funding there would enable us to train and develop more women mediators through the community.”⁵⁷

For example, Florence Swami is currently working in Fiji to create a safe space for women to engage on the question of SGBV against women and girls. Using regular dialogue and training, the women have been supported to share stories of SGBV. The process of dialogue has given them the confidence to open up on a subject that was not talked about and about which women were reluctant to share their individual stories.

Significant progress has been made, and a collective approach to storytelling has created an environment where many more women are engaging and talking publicly about being a victim of violence.⁵⁸ The process has also highlighted the lack of community discussion spaces and specialist services to assist women in dealing with the effects of SGBV.

Through this process, mediation not only empowers women to share their own experiences but also helps to create a more open environment for addressing women's safety.

In northern Nigeria, projects run by Justina Mike Ngwobia collaborated with UN Women to empower women to participate in local politics. Part of their approach was to build their capacity not only in mediation and peacebuilding skills, but also personal development skills, including self-confidence and leadership. This training helped women to challenge the prevailing idea that women should not have a role in public life and encouraged some women to return to education. As a result of the project a number of women have become involved in local traditional councils and in security monitoring groups across a number of states.⁵⁹

CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN MEDIATORS

In carrying out their mediation work members of WMC face a number of challenges. These are both individual and structural. Women face barriers arising from religious, cultural and social norms that question the place of women in the mediation field. They also operate within a policy context that does not always provide the support they need in order to develop their work.

STRUGGLING TO BE SEEN AS EQUAL

Many women must work twice as hard to establish their right to work as mediators and be seen as equal to men in that role. Many women mediators at local, national and international level experience routine resistance to the idea that they could be effective mediators or that they should be entitled to discuss peace with men or elders.⁶⁰

“In the initial stage the Ulema were hesitant to deal with me, because of my gender. Some of them would be very gruff and ask me to connect them with a male member in the group.”⁶¹

In some places women cannot even be called ‘mediators’ and so must describe their work in other terms that do not convey the value of what they do.⁶² To be recognised as mediators women have to work hard to establish their credibility over time through success in mediation. WMC members in Nigeria, India, Bougainville and Pakistan all noted how they were gradually accepted in the role of mediator only because leaders saw the work they did and saw that it was effective. At every step

women must work hard to demonstrate their professional credentials in a way that their male colleagues do not. This problem is amplified for young women, who face resistance based on their age as well as their gender.

Resistance to accepting women as mediators can make it particularly difficult for women to find entry points into conflicts. There is suspicion of the motives of women mediators, with community leaders questioning why they would work with certain armed groups,⁶³ or believing that their work is intended to promote radical social change, particularly in relation to women’s rights.⁶⁴

RISK TO PERSONAL SECURITY

Negative attitudes towards women mediators can also create a risk to their personal security.

“It poses a risk to go into a community and you can get caught in the middle. As a woman mediator you have to always assess the security situation as you may get caught in it.”⁶⁵

Mediators take great personal risks to intervene in conflict, at times placing their own lives at risk. The spaces in which mediation takes place can be highly masculine environments that women mediators must learn to navigate. They often face unwanted sexual advances and institutions supporting mediation processes need to recognise this and protect women mediators from such harassment. When women mediators are considered as equal to their male counterparts this threat is much reduced.

The risks go beyond the immediate. Women mediators work on difficult and complex issues related to conflict and security, and this can take a psychological toll over time.

“Sometimes you see, hear and learn things that can be very disturbing psychologically. It is important to know when to take a break so you don’t affect the process. For example, when working on violent extremism you can become overwhelmed, so it is important to take a break and step back and reflect.”⁶⁶

These risks need to be recognised and thought given to how local and international peacebuilding networks, as well as local authorities, can provide appropriate support for women mediators in dealing with the psychosocial consequences of their work. This is particularly the case where women are working on their own and without strong institutional support. There is a risk that women bear the responsibility of conflict resolution personally and alone in these situations.

EXCLUSION FROM DECISION-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES

The resistance to recognising the work of women mediators results in the lack of a platform to promote their work and limits their ability to use and share their experiences and insights in other forums, including international mediation processes. WMC members expressed frustration about the lack of connections that would enable them to contribute to formal processes either within their own countries or internationally. The absence of opportunities to be involved with international work is a commonly cited frustration among women mediators.

“There is a real lack of giving women the opportunity to participate. We need to enable women to be part of the mediation and peace process. If only women were given the opportunity like their male counterparts.”⁶⁷

The absence of connections between the mediation work that women do at the local level, and national or international level processes, is well recognised.⁶⁸ It is one of the difficulties that networks including WMC seek to address.

The lack of opportunities for women mediators to make connections with other processes, institutions and actors is symptomatic of the way in which peace processes are currently structured, and the difficulties of securing women’s participation in any role in the early stages of formal negotiations.⁶⁹ The problem is made more acute by the current shrinking space for civil society organisations to influence governments, or to amplify their concerns into global forums.

LACK OF SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

A related challenge for women mediators is the lack of sustainable funding to enable them to develop the impact of their work. This problem has deeper roots in the unequal distribution of funding for Women, Peace and Security within foreign policy budgets, and economic inequalities that create barriers to women’s participation in peace processes or decision-making bodies in any role.⁷⁰ The Commonwealth, through its Women’s Forum, has explicitly acknowledged that:

“[t]he lack of economic security and resulting poverty and women’s disproportionate role as care givers are some of the barriers to women’s leadership and participation across sectors.”⁷¹ These dynamics are experienced in a meaningful way by WMC members who are working to embed sustainable conflict prevention, management and resolution practices in their own communities.

WMC members highlighted the effects that a lack of funding has had on their work, including how it prevents them from being innovative in their approach and scaling their work to national level.⁷²

There are also practical risks with adopting a short-term, project-based approach to funding when the success of mediation relies on long-term approaches of building relationships and trust. An abrupt end to funding risks undermining work that has already been undertaken and hindering further progress. A lack of funding for follow-on work is a common problem.

Consultative meeting between WMC member and the Ulema on the rights of half widows, Srinagar, Kashmir. © Ezabir Ali



One WMC member highlighted the absence of funding for follow-on mechanisms to support the implementation of an accommodation reached through mediation.

“Sometimes the funding ends and you don’t have enough resources. For you might have to take people out of the community to a safe / neutral zone to stop people from gathering outside who might interfere. There is a need for external backing which is challenging with very limited funding.”⁷³

This lack of long-term funding in the implementation phase limits the potential of mediation to be used for sustained dialogue efforts.

Funding is also required to make mediation as an approach to conflict prevention and conflict resolution sustainable in the long term. As the experience of WMC members has demonstrated, training more women and community leaders in mediation skills helps to embed peaceful resolution of conflict within communities, especially in areas that may be harder to reach.⁷⁴ However, ongoing support, including mentoring,

is needed to deliver long-term results. Short-term planning and a lack of funds fundamentally undermine these activities.

CAPABILITY

Finally, to enable women to participate meaningfully in mediation requires support not only in terms of verbal commitments to policies, but also in the form of specific measures to address the practical barriers that women face. It is not enough to create opportunities for women to participate in mediation if the everyday realities of their lives make that participation impossible. Recognising the professional contribution of women mediators in all spaces means addressing structural issues such as access to education, the division of domestic responsibilities, and women’s financial independence that would allow them to develop their work.⁷⁵ Women’s mediation work is too often viewed as something that is done simply for the good of the community and not as a professional skill and field that needs to be properly remunerated and put on a sustainable footing by attending to practical issues such as employment status and remuneration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Advocacy for women mediators flows from the commitments made in UNSCR 1325 to include more women in peace and security. There has been an emphasis on increasing the representation of women, including women mediators, in official peace processes.

Women bring vital knowledge and understanding of conflict in their own countries and communities. By including women in official mediation and peacebuilding processes at all levels this knowledge can be shared with national and international mediation actors to help improve the sensitivity of process design and delivery. More needs to be done to enable this exchange.

However, to be effective, UNSCR 1325 must also be localised. It must be understood in local terms by women themselves, and not seen as something that applies only to international institutions and processes whose work may have little relevance to women and men in their own communities. Local mediation work can inform national and regional peace processes but does not need to serve high-level formal political processes alone. Rather, it has value in its own right in terms of embedding peace, and that value must be more fully understood and recognised.

One of the key recommendations to emerge from WMC is the need for greater political support for the work of women mediators at all levels, from the local to the national and regional. The lack of recognition from governments and international organisations

of the significant value of the role that women mediators play in peace processes, and the lack of opportunities and funding to enable women to increase the reach and impact of their work, arise from a severe lack of political will to support women on a practical level and to eradicate the barriers to their success.

The following recommendations highlight the ways in which different actors can support the work of women mediators in the different spaces in which they operate.

SUGGESTIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL, MULTILATERAL AND REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

a) Create mechanisms for women mediators and peacebuilders to apply their experiences and expertise beyond their contexts.

Women mediators hold significant experience, thematic expertise and skills in mediation that can be used as a transferable resource. There should be mechanisms to include women in official mediation processes and decision-making where they can share their expertise with other mediators within their own countries as well as from other conflicts and regions. There are practical steps that can be taken to create such mechanisms, such as the facilitation of platforms for the sharing of good practices, and ensuring that women's participation – including as mediators – is included in all mediation mandates created by the Security Council. Meaningful opportunities beyond observation status should be created for women to participate and they should be appointed as mediators in official processes from an early stage.

b) Champion the role played by women mediators and provide strategic leadership for their value and recognition at all levels of mediation.

Increasing the participation of women in international mediation is important. However, it is equally important that efforts are not solely focused on high-level processes. Attention to the work that women perform in their own communities and societies to build peace should be recognised and effectively resourced. While there has been greater recognition in recent years that connections need to be forged between local and global peace initiatives, there has been insufficient recognition of the value of community work as making its own contribution to international peace or the need for this work to be effectively resourced.

c) Provide professional development and strategic support to enable women to move between the different mediation 'spaces' – from the local to national or national to regional/international.

Professional development for women who are already experienced mediators needs to move beyond generic mediation or conflict sensitivity skills to address specific skills of 'high-level' political mediation where the context goes beyond the familiar. While there is some transferability of soft skills between the different spaces of mediation in which women operate, the professional skills and strategies required to engage in political mediation at the national or international level are different (due to the demands of the operating environment) and may require alternative or additional skills and knowledge to those used to engage in community mediation. Support for women to navigate these differences in approach and language is necessary to enable them to move more effectively between spaces, as is adequate funding.

Women are often excluded from political spaces, whether because of cultural norms or because of working practices that make

it difficult for women to remain in certain career paths, such as politics and diplomacy, which traditionally feed into mediation career paths.⁷⁶ While increasing women's political leadership more generally is required to address this gap, there is also a need to offer a route into mediation to women from non-traditional backgrounds and careers, thus diversifying the pool.⁷⁷

d) Create pathways for younger women mediators and women mediators who have been operating in different contexts to access careers in regional and international mediation – including participation in decision-making processes.

There is currently no clear pathway by which women mediators can gain international experience, creating a cycle of exclusion. While mediation relies heavily on relationships between the mediator and their team and the conflict parties, it should be possible to create opportunities within mediation teams where women mediators can learn the skills of the job through exposure and being part of the team. This should go beyond observation to active and meaningful participation in decision-making processes.

SUGGESTIONS FOR COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENTS

e) Provide high-level recognition and political support for women mediators.

Efforts to increase the participation of women in peace and security rely on the support of governments. Governments undertake the responsibilities contained in the WPS resolutions at a national level, and governments form the bridge between local or national mediation efforts and the work of regional and international organisations. The recognition and support of governments is therefore crucial to making progress on WPS.

It provides protection for women mediators in the work that they do, and opens up new opportunities to engage with new actors and in new conflicts. Government level support is also particularly important where women do secure high-profile leadership positions. Clear support and backing from a woman mediator's own government enhances her credibility and effectiveness in a leadership position.

f) Create opportunities to engage women mediators in the prevention of conflict across the Commonwealth and beyond.

Greater emphasis needs to be placed on the potential of women mediators to prevent violent conflict, rather than simply looking to them to help resolve it once it has already erupted. It is clear from the work of WMC members that a very significant element of their work is in conflict prevention – identifying early warning signs of conflict, addressing conflict within communities to prevent it from spreading or escalating, and empowering communities to resolve their own conflicts peacefully. Conflict prevention efforts save lives, protect economic development and political stability, and increase community resilience. The experiences of WMC members demonstrate remarkable leadership and innovation in conflict prevention and conflict resolution for longer-term peacebuilding. Women mediators are a powerful resource for conflict prevention in Commonwealth countries, to ensure greater stability within and between regions and to increase the chances of peace agreements being sustained at all levels.⁷⁸ Governments should provide political and financial support to their efforts as part of a strategy for sustainable peace.

g) Challenge attitudes that exclude women from mediation and peacebuilding roles.

Eliminating barriers to the work of women mediators depends on challenging attitudes that exclude women from mediation and decision-making processes for political, religious or cultural reasons. It also requires addressing the practical barriers that arise

from these attitudes, such as the risk to personal safety experienced by women mediators. Practical steps can achieve this, including engaging in strategic advocacy on the importance of the work of women mediators, sensitising male leaders to the benefits of working with women, and the implementation and enforcement of laws and policies designed to enable women's participation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

h) Work collaboratively with women mediators to deliver sustainable conflict prevention and peacebuilding locally and regionally.

Effective working relationships with national and local government institutions enhances the capacity of women mediators to make meaningful progress in community mediation. The ability to negotiate with local or national government departments, or to rely on their support, also enhances credibility and creates new entry points into different sites of conflict for women mediators.

i) Target funding for women mediators to engage in peacebuilding programmes with hard to reach communities, including youth.

Funding and support should be targeted at women mediators to develop peacebuilding programmes with excluded communities in hard to reach areas, to deliver benefits in terms of social cohesion and community resilience. WMC members' experiences demonstrate that women mediators have been successful in accessing hard to reach groups such as young women and men in rural areas where other peacebuilding interventions have failed. Their interventions not only de-escalate conflict and prevent violence, but also provide these communities with the skills to manage conflict on an ongoing basis. An investment in women mediators is an investment in long-term local, national and regional stability.

SUGGESTIONS FOR LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

j) Develop 'Train the Trainer' programmes to support women mediators to enable others to develop their skills.

A key aspect of the work of WMC members is the way in which they have sought to empower other women (and men) to work as mediators within their own communities. This is done largely without support. Formalising these arrangements through the funding of 'Train the Trainer' programmes would enhance the impact of this work. Supporting women leaders who are developing these initiatives would cascade the benefit of their mediation and peacebuilding work to a wider range of beneficiaries as well as increasing their recognition and credibility.

k) Provide mentoring and career opportunities that enable younger mediators, and mediators moving between spaces, to work with and understudy mediators already established in the field.

This could be achieved through mentoring programmes within existing mediation organisations and greater exposure to mediation processes that give younger mediators the opportunity to practice and gain the practical skills and experience necessary for career development.

l) Build collaborative relationships with other organisations to increase the sustainability of interventions.

A key factor in the success of WMC members' mediation efforts has been their ability to reach out and work with partner organisations, whether local, national or international. Local civil society should seek out and welcome the opportunity of collaborative approaches that avoid the pitfalls of competition for resources and prestige.

SUGGESTION FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS

m) Ensure sustainable long-term funding for women mediators and the initiatives they design and run.

A key challenge faced by WMC members has been the absence of sustainable funding beyond the life of a 'project'. The insecurity of funding undermines efforts to develop long-term and sustainable approaches to conflict. International organisations and regional bodies, as well as local and national government institutions with responsibility for allocating funding, should prioritise sustainable funding that allows long-term development of mediation work.

CONCLUSION

The contribution that women mediators make to peace and security extends far beyond narrow definitions of ‘participation’ under the WPS agenda. The work of WMC members challenges the idea of linearity in conflict – the idea that there is a beginning and an end rather than a continuous process of negotiation and renegotiation of the ways in which people live together. As such, conflict prevention and peacebuilding are an ongoing activity, and not one that can be neatly separated from the work of conflict resolution.

“A piece of paper doesn’t solve all histories and all the layers of things that have happened before. We want conflict to be neat and in a box so that we can fix it, but it’s always with us and we know that. It’s not neat, and tidy, and linear. You can’t just do a project and then you get peace. It doesn’t work like that.”⁷⁹

Viewing conflict in these terms has significant implications for how the work of women mediators is supported, funded and evaluated.

The increasing body of research on women mediators points to the limitation of the current WPS model that seeks to fit women into a rigid system of multi-track mediation.

It highlights the limits of placing the focus on simply equipping women to participate in the current system. A genuinely inclusive approach would focus not only on shaping and adapting women’s professional and thematic skills to put them on an equal footing with their male counterparts. Genuine inclusivity means being open to the specific skills and approaches to mediation that are demonstrated by women mediators. For mediation to benefit meaningfully from the diversity women bring, women must be enabled to contribute to mediation in their own language and using their own tools, knowledge and methods.⁸⁰ While the formal spaces of mediation remain relatively rigid and inflexible, the informal and hidden spaces are more fluid with greater possibility of connections between different spaces. In these spaces and in the processes employed within them, women mediators are making a significant contribution to peace and security and are reshaping how we understand conflict and our response to it. As we enter a new decade of WPS advocacy, we should hold onto and promote the valuable lessons drawn from the experience of women mediators.



Peer to peer learning group, meeting with other women peacebuilders and mediators in Belfast, Northern Ireland.
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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:

- What effect does gender bias and prejudice within international organisations have on the support offered to women mediators? What steps can be taken to challenge this and to create an enabling environment for women to operate in?
- How can policy on women mediators better capture the complexity and impact of structural factors such as racism that create impediments to their work?
- What further measures should governments and international organisations take to ensure the protection, personal security and wellbeing of women mediators and peacebuilders, recognising that this may vary according to their different intersectional and cross-cutting identities?
- How can women mediators be deployed into different contexts to support early warning conflict prevention and to influence early peacebuilding processes and design? How can deployment be adapted to enable (younger) women with caring responsibilities or less financially viable incomes to engage?
- What can be done to ensure that funding for women mediators is more targeted, accessible and long-term, to extend beyond the life of a project and support the building of trust and social cohesion required for lasting and sustainable peace?

APPENDIX 1

KEY RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

- i. **Ezabir Ali**
Indian-administered Kashmir
- ii. **Barbara Sangare (Bangura)**
Sierra Leone
- iii. **Barbara Tanne**
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- v. **Elizabeth Solomon**
Trinidad and Tobago
- vi. **Justina Mike Ngwobia** Nigeria
- vii. **Lantana Bako Abdullahi** Nigeria
- viii. **Linda Manano** Uganda
- ix. **Mable Chawinga** Malawi
- x. **Miriam Labanue**
Bougainville, Papua New Guinea
- xi. **Salma Yusuf** Sri Lanka
- xii. **Emma Leslie** Australia
- xiii. **Mossarat Qadeem** Pakistan
- xiv. **Nolliette Chihana** Malawi
- xvii. **Florence Swami** Fiji
- xviii. **Helen Bishop** Australia

APPENDIX 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A series of four WMC network meetings were held in 2019 in Malaysia, Africa, Australia and the UK where the initial ideas for the research were gathered through a series of focus group discussions and informal one-to-one interviews.

A research questionnaire was sent to all members of the network and followed up with semi-structured interviews (conducted in person and online). A total of 18 members out of 46, coming from all five regions of the Commonwealth, submitted case studies – 16 of which have directly informed this report.

The research findings were analysed by a consultant and written into this report which was shared with WMC members for comments and feedback. A validation workshop was held in June 2020 which was attended by 14 WMC members, including younger mediators (under 35 years), where the key findings and recommendations of the report were discussed and strengthened. Members unable to attend the validation workshop were also given the opportunity to contribute via other means.

ENDNOTES

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3. See <https://nordicwomenmediators.org>
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5. African Union (2018). *Strengthening African Women's Participation in Conflict Prevention, Mediation Processes and Peace Stabilisation Efforts: Operationalisation of "FemWise-Africa"*, September 2018. Available at: <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/final-concept-note-femwise-sept-15-short-version-clean-4-flyer.pdf>
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8. United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000); 1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015); 2467 (2019) and 2493 (2019). ; Resolutions are available at: https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/global-norms-and-standards#_WPS_resolutions
9. This terminology is referenced to help those who are not familiar with the field of mediation to understand the ways in which mediation is currently discussed and analysed in the sector. The findings in this report seek to go beyond the limitations of this terminology.
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13. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-49269136>
14. <http://www.centrepeaceconflictstudies.org/about/show-we-began/cpcs-staff/emma-leslie/>
15. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/people/%EF%BB%BFSanam-Naraghi-Anderlini>
16. Case Study (v) ES – Trinidad and Tobago
17. Case Study (vii) LA – Nigeria
18. Case Study (vii) LA – Nigeria; Case Study (xv) FS – Fiji
19. Case Study (vii) LA – West Africa; Case Study (xiii) MQ – Pakistan
20. Case Study (xi) SY – Sri Lanka
21. UN Women (2015)
22. Case Study (xv) FS – Fiji
23. Case Study (vii) LA- Nigeria
24. Case Study (xvi) HB- Australia
25. Case Study (viii) LM- Uganda
26. Case Study (x) ML- Bougainville, Papua New Guinea; Case Study (xv) FS- Fiji
27. These align with commonly accepted principles of peace mediation as adopted in the *United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation* (2012).
28. Case Study (ii) BS- Sierra Leone; Case Study (vi) JS-Nigeria
29. Case Study (ii) BS- Sierra Leone
30. Case Study (vii) LA- Nigeria; Case Study (viii) LM- Uganda
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34. Case study (xii) EL- Australia
35. Case Study (v) ES- Trinidad and Tobago
36. Case Study (v) ES- Trinidad and Tobago. See also Swaine, A. (2018). *Conflict Related Violence Against Women: Beyond Transition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
37. Case Study (vii) LA- Nigeria; the term *preventing violent extremism* is used here in the specific context of this case. However, it is noted that this terminology may be contested and have different connotations within the wider global context.
38. Case Study (i) EA- Indian-administered Kashmir; Case Study (ii) BS- Sierra Leone; Case Study (vi) NC- Malawi; Case Study (vii) LA- Nigeria; Case Study (xiii) MQ- Pakistan
39. See also Turner, C. (2020). 'Soft Ways of Doing Hard Things': women mediators and the question of gender in mediation'. *Peacebuilding* [online].
40. Case Study (vii) LA- Nigeria
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42. Case Study (xvi) HB- Australia
43. Case Study (xv) FS- Fiji
44. Case Study (xiii) MQ- Pakistan
45. Case Study (xiii) MQ- Pakistan
46. Case Study (xv) FS- Fiji
47. Case Study (ii) BS- Sierra Leone
48. Case Study (ix) MC- Malawi
49. Case Study (ii) BS- Sierra Leone
50. Case Study (ii) BS- Sierra Leone
51. Case Study (xv) FS- Fiji
52. Case Study (iii) BT- Bougainville, Papua New Guinea
53. Case Study (vi) JN -Nigeria
54. Case Study (vi) JN- Nigeria
55. Case Study (ix) MC- Malawi
56. Case Study (vii) LA- Nigeria
57. Case Study (xv) ML, Bougainville, Papua New Guinea
58. Case Study (xv) FS- Fiji
59. Case Study (vi) JN- Nigeria

60. Case Study (viii) LM- Uganda
61. Case Study (i) EA- Indian-administered Kashmir
62. Case Study (xiii) MQ- Pakistan
63. Case Study (vi) JN- Nigeria
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