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Issue Brief
Women in Conflict Mediation: Why it Matters

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This issue brief was drafted by Marie O'Reilly, associate editor at the International Peace Institute (IPI), and Andrea Ó Súilleabháin, visiting fellow at IPI.

It examines the current state of women's involvement in formal peace processes, focusing on the role of lead mediators. After setting out the UN's commitments and progress on ensuring women's participation, the brief explores why women's voices matter and how lead mediators can reinforce women's agency in building sustainable peace.

The brief builds on IPI's long-standing research in mediation and peacebuilding, as well as the institute's Women, Peace, and Security event series.

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Introduction

Traditional approaches to international conflict mediation—in which statesmen hammer out agreements between governments, or between governments and well-defined rebel movements—are falling short in the face of 21st century violence. Interstate conflict has decreased dramatically, and today one-off civil wars with clearly defined parties are relatively rare: 90 percent of civil wars occur in countries already affected by conflict.[1] Despite international efforts to mediate and implement peace agreements, between a quarter and a half of all civil wars recur within five years.[2]

Against this backdrop, it is clear that international actors are in need of innovative solutions for conflict prevention and resolution. Yet one possible source of fresh perspectives and alternative approaches remains largely untapped: women.

The UN Security Council has recognized the importance of increasing women's participation in resolving conflict and building peace. In its landmark Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security, it urged the secretary-general to appoint more women to senior UN peace-related positions and called on all actors to involve women in decision making when it comes to making peace.

Yet thirteen years have passed since Resolution 1325, and there continues to be a dearth of women occupying senior peacemaking positions. While examples abound of women's involvement in community-based peacebuilding, their participation in peace processes continues to be limited. It is partly for this reason that women's approaches to high-level mediation also remain poorly understood.

This is not only a problem for the 1325 agenda and its advocates; it is a problem for peacemakers and all those who seek peace. Initial research shows 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.

This issue brief examines women's involvement in formal peace processes, with a focus on the role of track-one mediators appointed by multilateral bodies.[3] It lays out the current state of affairs in theory and in reality, and

1 World Bank, *Word Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development* (Washington, DC, 2011), p. 2.

2 Paul Collier et al., *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press and the World Bank, 2003). Cf. Astri Suhrke and Ingrid Samset, "What's in a Figure? Estimating Recurrence of Civil War," *International Peacekeeping* 14, No. 2 (May 2007): 195–203. See also Charles T. Call, *Why Peace Fails: The Causes and Prevention of Civil War Recurrence* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2012).

3 "Track-one" mediation is carried out by states or intergovernmental organizations, in contrast to track-two initiatives typically led by NGOs, research institutes, churches, or individuals.

explores the impacts that women mediators can have on peace processes, their outcomes, and long-term peacebuilding as a result.

Present on Paper, Absent in Practice

In the year 2000, the UN Security Council laid down the gauntlet for the United Nations and its member states to involve women in preventing and resolving conflict and in building peace. In its landmark Resolution 1325—binding on all UN member states—the council recognized women as critical participants in peacemaking. Previous UN resolutions had treated women as victims of war, but none affirmed their important contributions to peace in conflict-affected states. In particular, the council stressed

> the importance of [women's] equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in *decision-making* with regard to conflict prevention and resolution.[4]

It went on to urge member states to increase the representation of women at all decision-making levels, making specific reference to conflict resolution mechanisms, among others. The council further called on the UN secretary-general to appoint more women as special representatives and envoys, "to pursue good offices on his behalf."[5]

Thirteen-twenty-five was more than a one-time resolution. It set a long-term agenda for the participation of women as well as their protection.[6] Its anniversary is marked annually with a yearly debate on its implementation as well as a yearly progress report from the secretary-general. The Security Council has passed five more resolutions to fill gaps and underscore the aims of 1325. Today nearly fifty countries, in addition to UN departments and international agencies, have adopted action plans for the implementation of 1325, with more continually in development.[7]

WHERE ARE ALL THE WOMEN?

Despite this specific and progressive framework, the pace of implementation has been slow—particularly with regard to women in mediation. Thirteen years after 1325 (and thirty-one years since the UN General Assembly's *Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Cooperation* that preceded it[8]) there are hardly any women acting as lead mediators in formal peace processes around the world today.

In fact, a study of thirty-one major peace processes between 1992 and 2011 by UN Women found that just 2.4 percent of chief mediators were women. Only slightly more women participated formally in peace processes as signatories (4 percent) or as part of negotiating delegations (9 percent).[9]

Recognizing this reality, in 2010, the secretary-general outlined a seven-point action plan for women's participation in peacebuilding, with more than twenty-five measurable indicators of progress.[10] The first point committed UN entities to take more systematic action to ensure women's participation in peace processes in particular, and the first indicator for tracking progress was the "appointment of women as chief mediator/special envoy to UN-led peace processes."[11] At the time of this action plan, ten years after the adoption of 1325, the UN had never officially selected a woman to lead a mediation process.

Finally, in March 2013, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed the UN's first woman lead mediator: Mary Robinson, former Irish president and former UN high commissioner for human rights, in the role of special envoy to the Great Lakes region.[12]

4 UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (October 31, 2000), UN Doc. S/RES/1325, fourth preambular para., emphasis added.

5 Ibid., operative paras. 1 and 3.

6 Like others before it, the resolution also required the protection of women from gender-based violence and all forms of abuse in conflict, and justice for victims of such crimes.

7 PeaceWomen, "List of National Action Plans," available at www.peacewomen.org/naps/list-of-naps .

8 UN General Assembly Resolution 37/63 (December 3, 1982), UN Doc. A/RES/37/63.

9 UN Women, "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections Between Presence and Influence," October 2012, p. 3.

10 United Nations Secretary-General, *Women's Participation in Peacebuilding: Report of the Secretary-General*, September 7, 2010, UN Doc. A/65/35–S/2010/466.

11 Ibid., para. 28. See the table outlining the seven-point action plan and its measures here: www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/seven_point_action_plan.pdf .

12 UN Women, "Michelle Bachelet Welcomes the Appointment of Mary Robinson as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region of Africa," March 26, 2013, available at www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2013/3/un-women-welcomes-appointment-of-mary-robinson .

Box 1: Appointing a Champion for Women

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's appointment of Mary Robinson as his special envoy for the Great Lakes region in March 2013 is a milestone for implementing Resolution 1325: she is the first woman designated as a UN lead mediator in a peace process.[13] Her appointment is an important recognition of women's critical role in bringing peace as well as of the disproportionate impact that the conflict in this region has had on women. Robinson's remarkable record on women's equality was well known to those responsible for her appointment; it was a hallmark of her work as Ireland's first woman president and as the first female UN high commissioner for human rights. Following these official posts, Robinson also launched an NGO that worked to strengthen women's leadership, particularly in Africa.[14]

As special envoy, Robinson has repeatedly declared women "the region's best hope for building lasting peace," while supporting their role in both high-level and grassroots peacemaking.[15] Not every woman appointed to a senior mediation position would necessarily take this approach, but Robinson has made it central to her mission to put the principles of Resolution 1325 into action. In doing so, she appears to be driven not only by normative commitments or promises of equality, but by a practical rationale. "As men take up arms, women hold communities together in times of war," according to Robinson. "Their active participation in peace efforts is essential, because they are the most effective peace builders."[16]

Robinson is tasked with supporting the implementation of the peace, security, and cooperation framework for the DRC, signed by eleven African countries in February 2013. She has said that without the full participation of women and civil society, no peace deal for the Great Lakes region can last.[17] The special envoy is engaged in ongoing consultations with women leaders and civil society groups across the region. For example, in July 2013, she co-chaired a meeting with the NGO Femmes Africa Solidarité and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in Bujumbura, Burundi, bringing together more than 100 women leaders from the region to emphasize their critical role in building sustainable peace.

Robinson has publicly committed to translating this bottom-up engagement with women into concrete participation in high-level processes: "As the first woman to be appointed UN special envoy, I have promised to ensure that women's voices are heard at the negotiating table."[18] This approach could end up serving as a model for other UN mediators—to reinforce women's agency in conflict mediation and peacebuilding through inclusion at all levels.

Nonetheless, women have held other senior peacemaking positions in the UN system and served as advisers on UN mediation teams in a variety of peace processes. Since 1948, thirty-five women have held forty-one positions as heads or deputy heads of UN missions in the field.[19] While not all of these positions involve mediation roles, some do. Among special representatives of the secretary-general (SRSGs), for example, Margaret Anstee of the UK played an active role in facilitating negotiations for a peace settlement in the Republic of Angola in the early 1990s. As special adviser of the secretary-general, New Zealander Ann Hercus also conducted shuttle talks in the Republic of

13 UN Department of Public Information, "Secretary-General, at International Forum, Says Women Now Head Five of Fifteen United Nations Peacekeeping Operations," September 13, 2013, available at www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sgsm15276.doc.htm .

14 UN Department of Public Information, "Secretary-General Appoints Mary Robinson of Ireland Special Envoy for Great Lakes Region of Africa," March 18, 2013, available at www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sga1394.doc.htm .

15 Mary Robinson, "Democratic Republic of the Congo's Women Hold Key to Lasting Peace," *The Guardian*, August 12, 2013, available at www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2013/aug/12/democratic-republic-congo-women-peace?INTCMP=SRCH .

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Sahana Dharmapuri, "Not Just a Numbers Game: Increasing Women's Participation in UN Peacekeeping," New York: International Peace Institute, July 2013, pp. 3–4. Figures updated here through mid-September 2013 using the lists of representatives, envoys, and advisers to the secretary-general on the UN website, available at www.un.org/sg/srsg/africa.shtml .

Cyprus in the late 1990s.[20]

Today, women hold ten out of seventy-four senior UN mediation positions, or 14 percent of them (see figure 1). On the one hand, this persistently low proportion provides evidence of the slow pace of progress when it comes to realizing the UN's promises in practice. On the other hand, 14 percent represents a significant increase compared to the 1990s or early 2000s. As recently as 2005, just four women (6.5 percent) occupied senior peace-related positions—two as SRSGs and two as deputy SRSGS.[21] Currently, one in three peacekeeping operations is headed by a woman—a milestone in the UN's history and a testament to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's efforts on women's empowerment.[22] Nevertheless, the trend has not moved continuously upward: the secretary-general himself expressed concern about a decrease in women's share of director-level positions in UN missions in 2012.[23]

Outside the UN system, a small number of women have served as track-one mediators in peace talks sponsored by the African Union (AU) and other institutions. For example, the Mozambican politician and humanitarian Graça Machel was one of three mediators for the post-election crisis in Kenya in 2008.[24] In the same year, Liberata Mulamula was one of five international facilitators in the peace conference for the Kivus in Goma, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, in her capacity as the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes

Figure 1: Women in active senior UN mediation positions.[25]

Name (Nationality)	Position	UN Mission/Country	Date Appointed
Sandra Honoré (Trinidad and Tobago)	Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of Mission	MINUSTAH/Haiti	July 2013
Noeleen Heyzer (Singapore)	Special Adviser of the Secretary-General	Timor Leste	June 2013
Aïchatou Mindaoudou Souleymane (Niger)	Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of Mission	UNOCI/Côte d'Ivoire	May 2013
Mary Robinson (Ireland)	Special Envoy of the Secretary-General	The Great Lakes Region	March 2013
Kaarina Immonen (Finland)	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UN Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator, and Resident Representative	BINUCA/ Central African Republic	December 2012
Karin Landgren (Sweden)	Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of Mission	UNMIL/Liberia	April 2012
Jacqueline Carol Badcock (United Kingdom)	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator, and Humanitarian Coordinator	UNAMI/Iraq	March 2012
Hilde Johnson (Norway)	Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of Mission	UNMISS/South Sudan	July 2011
Rosine Sori-Coulibaly (Burkina Faso)	Deputy Special Representative and UN Resident Coordinator, Resident Representative, and Humanitarian Coordinator	BNUB/Burundi	May 2011
Lisa Buttenheim (United States)	Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of Mission	UNFICYP/Cyprus	June 2010

20 UN Women, "Women's Participation," p. 7.

21 Antonia Potter, "We the Women: Why Conflict Mediation Is Not Just a Job for Men," Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Opinion, October 2005, p. 4.

22 UN Department of Public Information, "Secretary-General, at International Forum."

23 United Nations Secretary-General, *Report of the Secretary-General on Women and Peace and Security*, October 2, 2012, UN Doc. S/2012/732, para 67.

24 United Nations Development Fund for Women, "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections Between Presence and Influence," April 2009.

25 This figure was compiled in mid-September using the lists of representatives, envoys, and advisers to the secretary-general in all five regions available on the UN website at www.un.org/sg/srsg/africa.shtml . It does not include those that fall under the category of "other high level appointments," although some of these at-large appointees do carry out important peace-related work.

Region.[26] The AU Panel of the Wise is mandated to carry out mediation initiatives and broker peace agreements, and two of its five current members are women.[27]

The European Union has appointed eleven special representatives in different countries and regions, some of whom perform mediation roles and two of whom are women.[28] In July 2013, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) appointed a woman—Astrid Thor—as high commissioner on national minorities. While not strictly a track-one mediating position, the role of the high commissioner is close to that as it was conceived as an instrument for conflict prevention "to identify and seek early resolution of ethnic tensions that might endanger peace, stability or friendly relations between OSCE participating States."[29]

Beyond track-one processes, women have acted as chief mediators in less publicized and more informal negotiations at national levels, though these tend to be less well documented. For example, Betty Bigombe of Uganda acted as mediator between the Ugandan government and the Lord's Resistance Army in 2004 and 2005, following her earlier talks with the group in the 1990s.[30] Indeed, there are voluminous examples of women building peace in fragile states, despite their lack of recognition in high-level peace processes.[31] Women from conflict-affected states are often active participants and leaders in conflict resolution and peacemaking at the local level, engaging in community and civil society peace initiatives.

Women are also involved in "track one-and-a-half" mediation initiatives, such as those led by nongovernmental organizations and "private diplomacy" actors like the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue or the Carter Center. Yet, few women lead these mediation teams.

Why Does It Matter?

Track-one mediators engage directly with the leadership of warring parties in an effort to open negotiations and broker a peace agreement.[32] While women are often at the forefront of informal, behind-the-scenes peace initiatives, "peace agreements are usually negotiated predominately, if not exclusively, by men" and women tend to be consistently excluded from public, political decision making.[33]

Women should be involved in mediation and peace processes for a number of reasons. At a basic level, their participation is a question of equality and equity: it matters because peace negotiations and the agreements they generate set the structure and direction for postconflict reconstruction and politics, which affect the lives of all women and the society as a whole.

On average, women may also bring different mediating styles or experiences to the talks, at a time when fresh perspectives and approaches are badly needed.[34] Research on the effectiveness of mediators more broadly shows that both the style of the mediator and his or her gender can matter. For example, one dispute resolution study found that male and female mediators are equally effective at reaching an initial settlement, but female mediators are more effective at mediating binding settlements.[35] At an individual level, however, differences in style or approach may not necessarily hold.

Perhaps the most pragmatic reason why women

26 Ibid. The chief mediator in these talks was Abbé Apollinaire Malu Malu.

27 Mary Chinery-Hesse of Ghana and Marie-Madeleine Kalala of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. See African Union Peace and Security, "Panel of the Wise," available at www.peaceau.org/en/page/29-panel-of-the-wise-pow .

28 Patricia Flor, special representative for Central Asia, and Rosalind Marsden, special representative for Sudan. See European Union External Action Service, "EU Special Representatives," available at http://eeas.europa.eu/policies/eu-special-representatives/index_en.htm .

29 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), "OSCE Chairperson Welcomes Appointment of Astrid Thors as OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities," July 17, 2013, available at www.osce.org/cio/103654 .

30 Conciliation Resources, "Initiatives to End the Violence in Northern Uganda: 2002-09 and the Juba Peace Process," *Accord*, update to issue 11, London, 2010.

31 See Conciliation Resources, "Women Building Peace," *Accord Insight*, 2013, for case studies of women's peacebuilding activities in nine countries.

32 Potter, "We the Women," p. 3.

33 Christine Bell, Colm Campbell, and Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, "Justice Discourses in Transition," *Social and Legal Studies* 13, No. 3 (September 2004): 305–328, at 320.

34 For an interesting exploration of women's approaches at the peace table, including their communication styles and approaches to trust building and empathy, see Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, *Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2007): 53–92.

35 David Maxwell, "Gender Differences in Mediation Style and Their Impact on Mediator Effectiveness," *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 9, No. 4 (Summer 1992): 353–364. See also, Lorig Charkoudian and Ellen Kabcenell Wayne, "Fairness, Understanding, and Satisfaction: Impact of Mediator and Participant Race and Gender on Participants' Perception of Mediation," *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 28, No. 1 (Fall 2010): 23–52. For more on styles of mediation in an international context, see Isak Svensson and Peter Wallensteen, *The Go-Between: Jan Eliasson and the Styles of Mediation* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2010).

should be involved relates to their impact on the durability of the peace itself. As former US secretary of state Hillary Clinton expounded in a data-driven speech on the topic, "including more women in peacemaking is not just the right thing to do, it's also the smart thing to do."[36] While more evidence still needs to be gathered, and many men make vital contributions too, research on peace processes that have included women shows that a more robust and resilient peace is achieved as a result. This can be seen during the peace process, in the outcome of the talks, and in the implementation of the agreement thereafter. Unique to the chief mediators' position is the opportunity to implement firsthand the promises of Resolution 1325 at every stage.

IMPACT ON THE PROCESS

Formal peace processes offer an important window of opportunity to set an agenda for sustainable peace that includes the needs of the often-excluded half of the population. In the negotiations and peace processes that they design and oversee, chief mediators can include gender expertise at senior levels and invest in strategies for the inclusion of more women in negotiating parties. From Mary Robinson in the Great Lakes region to Margaret Vogt in the Central African Republic, women in lead mediating and peacemaking roles have shown a readiness to do this, consulting with women leaders from civil society and insisting on minimum levels of representation for women at peace talks (see boxes 1 and 3).

An inclusive peace process is more likely to lead to lasting peace; it can better identify and address the sources of conflict and what is needed by those most affected. It also reduces the likelihood that parties excluded from the negotiating table will act out and undermine the process.[37] Peace processes that only include conflict parties may wrongly accept these groups as representative of the whole population. Often warring factions do not have legitimacy with or represent the interests of the wider public.

Moreover, peace negotiations that include only armed groups risk the appearance of rewarding violence while failing to acknowledge the critical role of civil society actors in bringing peace.[38] Women leaders, particularly those from civil society groups, can appeal to their communities and generate greater buy-in for the mediation process among the broader public. This is especially true in societies where women's interactions with male leaders tend to be limited. The chief mediator—whether male or female—can play a role in engaging directly with women leaders from early on in the process, thus investing in the long-term acceptance and consent for the peace process in the communities these women represent. This is not only a result of the chief mediator behaving more inclusively toward those affected by the process; it reflects the mediator's willingness to demonstrate and implement inclusivity in terms of who is at the peace table and permitted to participate fully.[39]

The importance of civil society groups cannot be overstated. Including women in formal peace processes is a necessary goal, but women who are at the peace table to represent a particular party or rebel group tend to primarily voice the interests of their faction; they may differ very little from their male counterparts' priorities and demands. Conversely, women from civil society often represent groups of women and voice their collective priorities and concerns. For this reason, in his seven-point action plan on women's participation in peacebuilding, the secretary-general mandated that chief mediators regularly report on their consultations and negotiations with women's civil society groups.[40]

IMPACT ON THE OUTCOME

The 2012 *United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation* recognizes that women are powerful allies for any peace process. In its advice for UN-appointed mediators, the guide asserts that "women leaders and women's groups are often effective in peacemaking at community levels and should therefore be more strongly linked to the high-level mediation process."[41] The participation of women at

36 Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Keynote Address at the International Crisis Group's 'In Pursuit of Peace' Award Dinner," New York, December 16, 2011, available at www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/12/178967.htm .

37 UN Department of Political Affairs, "United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation," June 2012, p. 11.

38 Ibid.

39 Potter, "We the Women," p. 14.

40 United Nations Secretary-General, *Women's Participation in Peacebuilding: Report of the Secretary-General*, September 7, 2010, UN Doc. A/65/35–S/2010/466, para 28.

the peace table increases the legitimacy and national ownership not only of the process itself, but also of the outcome. The peace agreement, and the likelihood of successful implementation, is strengthened by direct and consistent participation of women.

The organized participation of women's groups in a peace process also affects the text of the eventual peace agreement, according to analysis by UN Women. "Women's structural exclusion from peace talks has significant consequences for the extent to which issues of concern to them—such as violence against women or women's citizenship rights—are addressed."[42] Where women are substantively involved in the process, agreements are more gender-sensitive and thus more comprehensive and legitimate.[43] For example, women tend to demand language on violence against women, women's citizenship rights, or women's participation on transitional and implementation bodies (see box 2).

IMPACT ON SUSTAINABLE PEACE

Beyond the settlement itself, women can have impact on the durability of the peace achieved. Data shows that peace negotiations with high levels of civil society involvement, including the participation of women, are less likely to result in resumed warfare.[44] While there are only a small number of cases to draw from, it seems that the inclusion of women at the peace table empowers and mobilizes women's groups to remain engaged during the difficult phase of implementation and peacebuilding that follows an agreement.[45] Their work of turning the objectives of peace into reality at the local level, and their symbolic value as representing half of the society, is critical to lasting implementation. As Mary Robinson put it in the context of the Great Lakes region, "There is a fresh chance to do more than just attend to the consequences of the conflict…There is a chance to resolve its underlying causes and to stop it for good."[48]

Box 2: Presence and Voice—Women at the Table in Guatemala and Northern Ireland

Luz Méndez arrived at the peace talks in Guatemala in the mid-1990s as the sole female delegate for the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity party. Although she was there representing the party and its interests, Méndez also negotiated on behalf of women beyond any party affiliation. She advanced a number of gender equality concerns and contributed to the incorporation of commitments to address them in the peace accords. These references to women, peace, and security in the outcome of the talks were unprecedented, addressing discrimination against women, women's political participation, and their access to services and resources.[46]

In Northern Ireland, women also had a direct impact on the content of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement when they secured a place at the peace talks. The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) secured enough support across communities to earn two of the twenty seats at the negotiating table. They used their access to the talks to bring a greater focus on health and social issues in the agenda and ultimately secured the inclusion of language on victims' rights and reconciliation in the agreement, including a commitment of support to young victims of violence. Another clause also called for women's full and equal political participation. The NIWC also proposed a civic forum to ensure that the dialogue secured in the peace talks could be continued in an inclusive process after the negotiations.[47]

When women's voices are brought to the peace table, they often raise economic and social issues and advocate for a more equitable peace.[49] This helps ensure that common drivers of conflict and

41 UN Department of Political Affairs, "United Nations Guidance," p. 11.
42 UN Women, "Women's Participation," p. 3.
43 Ibid., p. 4.
44 Ibid., p. 2.
45 Ibid., p. 4.
46 Potter, "We the Women," p. 14; UN Women, "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations," p. 8.
47 Michelle Page, Tobie Whitman, and Cecilia Anderson, "Bringing Women Into Peace Negotiations," *Strategies for Policymakers* No. 2, October 2009; Kate Fearon, "Northern Ireland Women's Coalition: Institutionalizing Political Voice and Ensuring Representation," in Conciliation Resources, "Women Building Peace."
48 Mary Robinson, quoted in "Peace in Great Lakes Region Needs Active Role of Women, UN Envoy Tells UN Security Council," *AfroAmerica Network*, May 7, 2013, available at www.afroamerica.net/AfricaGL/2013/05/07/peace-great-lakes-region-needs-active-role-of-women-un-envoy-tells-un-security-council/ .
49 Anderlini, *Women Building Peace*.

fragility are addressed in the agreement and subsequent reconstruction process. "States are particularly vulnerable when large numbers of people living within their boundaries are disconnected from state institutions, and when state institutions are accountable only to an elite minority."[50] More inclusive peace negotiations and progressive agreements can lead to more equal social, political, economic, and cultural rights—in principle and in reality—and this in turn can rebuild trust between state and society. Inclusive mediation can serve as an important step toward establishing this social contract in a postconflict state, creating an environment where peace agreements can flourish and relapse into conflict is less likely.

Box 3: Pushing for Inclusion from Multiple Angles in Libreville

Resistance to women's participation was strong in the peace talks between the government of the Central African Republic (CAR) and the Séléka rebel coalition held under the auspices of the Economic Community of Central African States in the Gabonese capital of Libreville in January 2013. This was the assessment of Margaret Vogt, then UN special representative of the secretary-general to the CAR. "Even for me, I was surprised at the pushback," said Vogt, who headed the UN's facilitation team.[51]

When probed, the parties to the conflict voiced the concern that gender was not the issue under discussion at the talks. In reality, Vogt said in an interview later, "it boils down to sharing positions afterwards." The perception was that involvement of women would dilute the power to be shared. The SRSG, alongside AU representative Hawa Ahmed Youssouf, insisted on a minimum level of participation by women in negotiating teams, but it was an uphill battle: "The AU representative and I started by proposing three out of five; we ended up in many of the delegations with only one out of five. But if we had not insisted, the women would not have been there."

The talks were mediated by heads of state from the Economic Community of Central African States and chaired by the Republic of the Congo. While the UN facilitation team and its AU counterpart provided expertise, advice, and logistical support, Vogt sought to bring women's voices and issues into the talks in other ways. She had created a consultative group of Central African women as advisers when she became SRSG—women known and respected from their work in NGOs, in government, and in advocacy. A UN gender adviser also provided a line of communication between women on the ground and the talks via the SRSG. "At the height of the crisis I got most of my information because the women called," said Vogt, "because they had the confidence to call." The gender adviser also provided women participants in the talks with coaching on women's issues and how to frame them, which Vogt saw as crucial. "I took my gender adviser to all the talks," said Vogt.

The Libreville agreement of 2013 became the first agreement where parties committed to end gender-based violence and to pay reparations to victims of these crimes, says Vogt. However, they did not keep their word in practice. In addition, despite the efforts of the SRSG, the AU representative, and others to ensure the inclusion of women in the negotiating delegations and to bring the voices of women from civil society to the table, they were not sufficiently heard. The government of national unity created following the talks contained fewer women than the one before.

Ultimately, the parties did not live up to the agreement. The Séléka alliance carried out a coup in March 2013 and the country remains in disarray. Analysts put forth a variety of reasons for this latest addition to a history of failed peace deals in the CAR—the talks were rushed; the real talks took place between regional heads of state instead of the warring parties; more powerful, nonpartisan international guarantors were needed; and civil society representation was inadequate.[52]

50 UN Women, "Women's Participation," p. 4.

51 The quotes in this section are from interviews with Margaret Vogt, special representative and head of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic from May 2011 to June 2013. The interviews took place in New York on September 12 and 16, 2013.

52 Lesley Anne Warner, "Flawed Peace Process Leads to Greater Unrest in the Central African Republic," *World Politics Review*, March 26, 2013; Kennedy Tumutegyereize and Nicolas Tillon, "Central African Republic: Peace Talks Without the Talks," *African Arguments*, March 15, 2013.

Overcoming Obstacles in Incremental Steps

There are undoubtedly women with the right skills and qualifications to be appointed to lead mediating roles, but other obstacles get in the way of their appointments—often not related to skills at all. At the United Nations, for example, nationality plays a significant role. Member states will push for their own candidates' appointments, and until women's status and representation improves domestically, states will remain less likely to promote female candidates.

In addition, in the field, aggressors in a conflict who then become negotiators at the peace table are usually seeking to gain power for themselves—not to share it with another group that is not even present. As such, they remain likely to resist the participation of women in peace processes. For them, a female mediator may symbolize a path toward sharing power or its spoils with women. Indeed, it is possible that a similar power dynamic may play a role in the organizations and institutions leading the mediation.

Yet, involving women in peace processes clearly matters—both in principle and in practice. The reams of resolutions, action plans, and guidance documents are a testament to this. Member states have a responsibility to incentivize qualified women to come forward as candidates for high-level mediating positions. And all relevant institutions have a responsibility to ensure that adequate training is provided and to strive for greater equality in the appointment of mediators. With three women on their eight-member Standby Team of Mediation Experts and gender-sensitive training, the UN's Mediation Support Unit is taking valuable steps in this direction.[53]

Having said all this, the snail's pace of progress seen thus far indicates that we are unlikely to see parity in these appointments any time soon. Fortunately, many men leading track-one peace talks are sensitive to the importance of women's inclusion in peace processes and aware of the impact that this is likely to have on the outcome in the near and long term. They should be provided with more gender advisers and women experts in support teams, and encouraged to accept them, so that women can be brought to the table as part of negotiating delegations and so that the views of women outside of these parties can be heard and their ideas included in the process.

Conclusion

Track-one mediators are a small group of influential individuals—fewer than a hundred worldwide are currently or have ever been active.[54] Including women in this group represents a step toward achieving a greater degree of gender equality in society and its institutions. In addition, the evidence points to the significant potential for high-level women mediators to improve the durability of peace.

As we have seen, however, very few women are appointed as lead mediators in track-one processes. The role of mediator is a specialized position, and the best mediator for the job is the one who is most likely to be effective, regardless of gender. "We do not say that men should be at the peace table because they bring something special," Margaret Vogt explains, but "If you choose the right women to come to the table, as well as if you choose the right men, then they will bring to the table issues that are fundamental."[55]

Recognizing the changing nature of conflict and the need for mediation initiatives to adapt accordingly, the UN secretary-general increasingly appoints mediators not only to resolve conflicts, but to engage in long-term peacemaking and oversee the implementation of peace agreements in countries emerging from conflict. If more women take up these roles, opportunities for further examining their impact and for better understanding the necessities for peace will only increase.

53 For more on the Mediation Support Unit's activities, see the UN Peacemaker website at www.peacemaker.un.org . The Mediation Support Unit is working with the Podziba Policy Mediation organization to develop gender-sensitive training for mediators. See "United Nations Gender and Inclusive Mediation Processes," available at http://podziba.com/projects/united-nations-gender-and-inclusive-mediation-processes .

54 Potter, "We the Women," p. 3.

55 Margaret Vogt quoted in Marie O'Reilly, "Democratizing Peace Processes: Women at the Table," *The Global Observatory*, September 18, 2013.

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