# INTER-REGIONAL MEETING OF THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY FOCAL POINTS NETWORK

Taking Practical Action to Implement the WPS Agenda through Inter-Regional Cooperation

*6-7 December 2022,*
*OR Tambo Building, Pretoria, South Africa*



# BACKGROUNG NOTES – WORKING GROUPS

# Working Group 1: Women's Participation in Peace Processes – Role and Operationalization of Women Mediator Networks

**Introduction**

Women's representation in decision-making and participation in peace processes is important, but not enough in itself to achieve sustainable peace. Gender equality considerations and priorities need to be integrated in all steps of conflict prevention and conflict resolution. In seeking to create spaces for women's engagement in mediation processes, women mediator networks have been established at national, regional, continental and international levels. In a global context of increasingly complex and interconnected challenges, there is growing evidence to suggest that multiple collaborative efforts are the most comprehensive way of addressing these challenges and envisioning a collective future.

**Background**

This momentum has seen the rise of networks of women mediators that seek to increase the number of women who are actively involved in local, continental and international peace mediation efforts.[1] The establishment of networks of women across regions is an emerging strategy that has the potential to increase women's leadership and influence peace negotiations. Key continental women mediator networks[2] include the African Network of Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa), Nordic Women Mediators (NWM), Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN), Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC), Arab Women Mediators Network (AWMN), and the Southeast Asian Network of Women Peace Negotiators and Mediators (SEANWPNM). Regional networks include the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) Regional Women Mediators Network that was recently launched, as well as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) who are in the process of establishing a SADC Women Mediators Network. World-wide networks include the Global Women Mediators Network.

Women mediator networks seek to provide greater access and opportunity for women to participate in peace processes, along with enhancing their participation to be meaningful and result in transformative change towards addressing gender inequality. Therefore, most networks of women mediators serve as an essential resource and enable a roster of women experts in conflict resolution who can be readily deployed in mediation processes. Women involved in mediation in different contexts can also learn from each other through these networks by sharing effective cross regional and cross-track practices, expertise and peer-to-peer learning. For example, women in the networks working at Track II and Track III mediation efforts can benefit from the experiences of women engaged in Track I mediation efforts, often on the dynamics of the highly political formal processes. The women engaged in Track I, on the other hand, can also learn and benefit from the experiences of women working in Track II and Track III, more particularly on the issues affecting women and the community at grassroots level. Thus, bringing women involved in all Tracks - Track I, Track II and Track III together

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[1] https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/what-do-networks-of-women-mediators-mean-for-mediation-support-in-africa/

[2] https://www.globalwomenmediators.org/about/#infographics

can be a powerful partnership and learning approach for women peacemakers on the ground, who are often not in the spotlight.[3]

The presence of the networks makes it easy for local women peacemakers to access and influence formal processes with their set of demands for women's meaningful participation.  This also ensures that their work translates into influence and impact. It is therefore imperative that women mediator networks are truly explored for linking the interdependence of the various tracks of mediation efforts but importantly to ultimately drive systemic and transformative change of gender inequality. The key question that arises as the emerging trends of establishing new women mediation networks, and previous networks re-assessing this new context remains - How can the women mediation networks offer new insights and strategies to give expression to the purpose of this Focal Point Network meeting on *"Taking Practical Action to Implement the WPS Agenda through Inter-Regional Cooperation?"*

**Objectives**

Building on recommendations from the [Focal Points Network meeting in Geneva](#) and the discussions on women's participation in peace efforts, participants will address opportunities and challenges in establishing and operationalizing women mediator networks. Key recommendations are for international and regional third parties, both formal and informal, to listen to and collectively work with diverse local actors – before, during and after formal negotiations to address specific context and cultural challenges to the inclusion of women in peace processes. Third parties should foster consensus among civil society actors, particularly women's rights organizations and women mediator networks, on societal issues and priorities in order to strengthen civil society impact in negotiations. Participants will also identify areas of collaboration between local, national and regional mediator networks across regions.

**Guiding Questions**

1.  *What global and regional, observable best practices, can be shared from current peace efforts of working together between the various Mediation Tracks for women's inclusion and meaningful participation in peace efforts?*
2.  *How are women mediation networks engaging and strategizing to influence the formal with the informal peace efforts, and importantly address the poor or lack of women's meaningful participation in current global peace efforts?*
3.  *What strategies can be identified and shared for strengthening women's leadership and participation in political, social and economic life for their meaningful engagement in peace efforts and the implementation of existing peace agreements?*

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[3] [https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/what-do-networks-of-women-mediators-mean-for-mediation-support-in-africa/](https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/what-do-networks-of-women-mediators-mean-for-mediation-support-in-africa/)

# Working Group 2: WPS action plans – sustaining financing and civil society engagement

**Introduction**

The past year has been marked by a complex web of global crises as the world struggles to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity, economic turmoil, and a backsliding trend into authoritarianism and sustained conflicts. These crises and resulting insecurities have reversed hard-earned gains in women's rights and gender equality, particularly in the area of women, peace, and security (WPS). While Member State commitments to implement the WPS agenda have risen significantly, with 105 countries now having adopted a national action plan (NAP) on WPS, actual implementation continues to be compromised by the absence of sustainable resourcing, including adequate funds, as well as human and technical resources required for effective change.

Faced with increasingly complex security challenges, a more concerted effort and a greater collaboration between actors has become a necessity. Previous WPS Focal Point Network meetings, including the most recent meeting in Geneva in May 2022, have repeatedly emphasized the need for better coordination and cooperation between actors, particularly to increase partnerships and collaboration at the regional level and with civil society to strengthen mutual accountability and to support exchange and learning.

**Background**

In this context, multi-stakeholder partnerships between regional organizations, national governments, development actors, civil society and the private sector can help unlock new opportunities, optimize resources, and build on lessons and successful practices of the past. As reiterated in previous Focal Points Network meetings, working with civil society remains essential to effective regional, national, and local implementation of the WPS agenda, as the core way to translate policy commitments into concrete actions, plans, and strategies. It is crucial to have mechanisms in place to link civil society with regional and sub-regional organisations. These CSOs, including local grassroots organizations and youth organizations, should be included from the beginning in the design of a new NAP and remain involved throughout the life cycle of the NAP, including having a codified role in NAP steering committees and monitoring and evaluation processes.

In addition to CSOs, networks of women leaders like the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) and mediator networks, such as FemWise-Africa, along with the Mediterranean, Nordic, Commonwealth and Arab Women Mediator Networks and ASEAN Women for Peace Registry, among others, play a critical role in advancing WPS. These platforms and umbrella networks also provide an opportunity for the inclusion of diverse CSO viewpoints on WPS. Experience shows that efficient partnerships depend on transparency, accountability, and ownership by all stakeholders. This is equally true for sustainable financing for NAPs and the WPS agenda.

There is a pressing necessity to substantially increase funding support for the WPS agenda and for innovative financing mechanisms, such as the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund and other forms of multilateral, regional, bilateral, and national investments. Sufficient and sustainable financing is also needed for a WPS regional, national, or local action plan to be meaningful.

As recommended in [previous Focal Points Network meetings](#), specific resourcing for NAPs needs to be included in national budgets, and where specific WPS funding or a budget line is not included in the national budget, a gender-responsive budgeting policy can be an effective and flexible approach to accessing greater funding for WPS programming and advocacy. Targeted financing plans should also be developed within sectoral and local implementation plans for NAPs. In terms of donor support for NAP implementation, Focal Points have highlighted the benefits of the use of WPS 'basket funds' that allow implementing partners to target financial resources to NAP priorities and WPS implementation.

A number of civil society networks have also recommended that "Governments, with support of the United Nations and bilateral donors, should ensure that human security focus in national policies is adequately funded and developed in partnership with local peacebuilders, including national peacebuilding strategies, National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), national strategies on preventing violent extremism and national arms control and disarmament policies while ensuring sufficient funding for their implementation."[1]

**Objectives**

This working group session will build on recommendations from previous Focal Points Network meetings to discuss and identify concrete actions to sustain financing and civil society engagement in NAP implementation and to build bridges between governments and civil society organizations. Participants will share best practices that are applicable and can be replicated not just by Network Members but by other countries and regional organizations yet to join the Network or develop action plans.

**Guiding Questions**

1) *What are some innovative practices and mechanisms to involve civil society in the full cycle of the NAP – from design to evaluation and adoption of the next plan?*
2) *What are some specific examples of strategic partnerships and financing mechanisms to address funding gaps in the implementation of regional, national and local action plans?*
3) *What are some innovative funding models to support women's civil society organizations and women peacebuilders in their efforts to support NAP implementation?*

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[1] Feminist Solutions for more Impactful Financing for Peacebuilding (2021) by the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), Kvinna till Kvinna, MADRE, and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF): https://gppac.net/resources/fund-us-you-want-us-win-feminist-solutions-more-impactful-financing-peacebuilding

# Working Group 3: Regional and sub-regional organizations and strengthening WPS collaboration

**Introduction**

While Member States are expected to lead in the implementation of the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda, regional and sub-regional inter-governmental organizations play a critical role in the prevention and mitigation of conflicts and crises. These organizations are uniquely positioned "to offer support in mediation and reconciliation, and can be influential in advocating women's full, equal, and meaningful, as well as participation in all aspects of peace and security."[1]

Several regional organizations are undertaking initiatives to enhance collaboration, including collaborating with the United Nations (UN), to share best practices and coordinate gender-responsive and human rights-based approaches that will ensure the meaningful participation of women, particularly those from traditionally marginalized groups, in political and security processes as well as improve disaggregation of data and gender analysis.

**Background**

In Africa, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the East African Community (EAC), serve as building blocks for continental integration and the WPS agenda. Additionally, the European Union (EU), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), among others, have been leading in collaborative work with national and local governments, and local civil society organizations.

Noting the significant role that regional and sub-regional organizations play, as well as being strategically located as key interlocutors between key stakeholders, there is a necessity that they provide an opportunity for collaboration amongst member states within their region and local civil society organizations (CSOs), who have accessibility at the community level, and are well placed to effectively implement the WPS agenda. The notion of leaving "no one behind" is one of the key values of the WPS agenda as it strives to include women at all levels. In West Africa for instance, in acknowledgement of the contributions of women in building peaceful and stable societies, the African Union (AU) and ECOWAS developed legal frameworks to assure the role of women in governance, electoral processes, conflict prevention and resolution, as well as peacebuilding. The region is both mindful of the need to protect the rights of women and girls from conflict-related sexual violence and are deeply appreciative of the role that women groups at national and regional levels have played in the resolution of conflicts such as those that occurred in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire in the early 2000s.[2]

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[1] https://reliefweb.int/report/world/conflicts-destroying-hard-won-gains-regional-organizations-must-include-women-peace-talks-political-negotiations-speakers-tell-security-council

[2] https://www.ghanamissionun.org/security-council-meeting-on-women-and-peace-and-security/

**Objective**

It is imperative to encourage cross-collaboration among sub-regional organizations on the WPS agenda. This would ensure the effective exchange of best practices across regions and deepen partnerships to bridge knowledge gaps required to support women's empowerment initiatives. Furthermore, collaborative efforts with the UN, EU and AU can foster women's participation in peace processes through training programs and other capacity building efforts they are able to provide to sub-regional organizations.[1]

This working group will identify opportunities for increased intra-regional cooperation and collaboration between States and CSOs, but importantly inter-regional and sub-regional collaboration to promote and strengthen the WPS agenda.

**Guiding Questions**

1. *How can regional and sub-regional organizations create opportunities to jointly evaluate and exchange practice across regions on the implementation of the WPS agenda?*
2. *How can the interdependent relationship between Government and CSO's for the meaningful realization of the WPS agenda provide practical strategies for the implementation of the WPS agenda?*
3. *How can the work of regional and sub-regional organizations be strengthened to effectively support the development and implementation of WPS national action plans?*

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[1] https://www.ghanamissionun.org/security-council-meeting-on-women-and-peace-and-security/