BPC Policy Brief

International Peace Mediation and Gender: Bridging the Divide

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BRICS Policy Center **Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas - BRICS**

GSUM
Global South Unit for Mediation

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Summary

Executive Summary

This policy brief explores the nexus between international peace mediation and gender. It focuses on the state of play of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda almost two decades since the passing of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in October 2000. The WPS Agenda has become a powerful and salient normative instrument in the mediation field and most comprehensively represents the nexus between gender and mediation. Since 2000, it has produced large scale efforts to address existing inequalities between women and men as agents for change in peacemaking activities. While these efforts are embraced by mediators per se, addressing these inequalities in practice has achieved mixed results and can be subject of debate between those doing mediation and those supporting mediation from a distance. This policy brief does not advocate for either a normative or pragmatic approach to integrating mediation and gender, but instead aims to illuminate key conceptual debates and practical realities in the ground in different peace processes around the world. It also illustrates the specific opportunities and challenges faced by national governments in implementing the WPS Agenda at the national policy level through National Action Plans. The policy brief concludes with suggested research agendas and questions for debate and discussion.

International Peace Mediation and Gender: Bridging the Divide

Julia Palmiano Federer and Rachel Gasser

1. Introduction

This policy brief aims to explore the nexus between international peace mediation and gender[1]. Since the passing of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UN SCR 1325) on Women, Peace and Security in October 2000, the resulting Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda has produced a large-scale effort to integrate a gender perspective into different areas of peacebuilding policy and practice. The WPS Agenda is a powerful normative instrument that has practical consequences for the mediation field, and thus, for the purposes of this policy brief, most comprehensively represents the nexus between gender and international peace mediation[2].

While the WPS Agenda encompasses broad dimensions of peacebuilding ranging from women's political participation in post-conflict decision-making processes to women's involvement in technical, security-related processes, this policy brief focuses on the WPS Agenda's particular salience in the field of peace mediation. It focuses on two aspects of the WPS Agenda related to mediation: the call for greater women's meaningful participation in peace processes and the call for more gender-sensitive clauses in peace agreements[3]. A UN Women study of 31 major peace processes between 1992 and 2011 reveals that 4 per cent of signatories, 2.4 per cent of chief

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(1) The authors would like to thank David Lanz, Annemarie Sancar, Danielle Furgler, Maira Siman, and Isa Mendes for their valuable reviews of the text.
(2) Hereafter referred to as 'mediation'.
(3) While gender refers to the socially constructed experiences of both men and women, gender norms in mediation processes tend to focus on women. Normative instruments on gender in peace processes such as the WPS Agenda focus on women as the majority of mediators have historically been male. These norms are based on equality between and among men and women. They focus on how women's experiences can render them actors for change in conflict and peace. This is why the peace mediation discourse is concerned mainly with (1) women's meaningful participation as parties and mediators in peace processes and (2) the results of their inclusion (see Palmiano Federer 2016).

mediators, 3.7 per cent of witnesses and 9 per cent of negotiators were women (UN Women 2012). The amount of gender-sensitive content of peace agreements and impact of women's increased participation remains more elusive still.

While efforts to address the inequality between men and women's representation in peace processes are embraced by many mediators per se, the implementation of the WPS Agenda in mediation processes can be subject to debate. Indeed, in many mediation processes around the world, the dearth of women's meaningful participation and the lack of gender-sensitive clauses in resulting ceasefire and peace agreements are lamentable. However, addressing these inequalities in practice has achieved mixed results.

Fully aware of the nuanced approach required for this topic, this policy brief does not advocate for either a normative or pragmatic approach. It instead aims to shed light on the existence of an important nexus between gender and mediation, and illuminate the conceptual debates and the realities on the ground. The policy brief is organized as follows: firstly, it explores academic and policy literature respectively on peace mediation and gender and notes the gap between these fields. Secondly, it bridges these two fields of literature by exploring the background, policies, and debates of the WPS Agenda from its inception in 2000 to date. Thirdly, it looks at the state of play of the WPS Agenda in mediation, both conceptually and in practice. Fourthly, it explores its implementation in different conflict contexts around the world. Fifthly, it explores the national policy aspect of the WPS Agenda through National Action Plans (NAPs). The policy brief concludes with suggested research agendas and questions for debate and discussion.

2. Understanding Mediation

Mediation is a form of conflict resolution that can be defined as "a process whereby a third party assists two or more parties, with their consent, to prevent, manage or resolve a conflict by helping them to develop mutually acceptable agreements" (UN 2012). It is a form of peaceful dispute settlement as laid out by the UN Charter (Article 33).

The academic and policy literature on mediation is rich, but tends to focus on material or contextual factors that lead to a 'successful' mediation process, often seen as the signing of a ceasefire or peace agreement. The academic literature on mediation focuses on the contextual factors such as the ripeness of conflicts (Zartman 1985) or the behaviour of mediators (Bercovitch and Wells 1993; Bluman-Schroeder 2004) and other factors with an emphasis on the outcome of the process or agreement (Wall and Lynn 1993; Kleiboer 1996). Research on mediation is often quantitative in nature, with large data sets that span across hundreds of peace processes over time.

These material and contextual factors can be grouped into three broad categories: the actors that are directly and indirectly included (or excluded) in mediation processes, the content or the agenda topics that are discussed and the design of the mediation process.

Actors

In both academic and policy literature, the actors in a mediation process can be seen as those who are affected by the conflict and those who have influence (Mason et al. 2015) on the conflict. This definition is intentionally broad as it leaves space for interpretation of who is affected, who has influence and consequently, who should get a seat at the table. Actors in mediation can be

broadly conceived under two main categories: who gets a seat at the table and who mediates. Mediation processes can be defined as processes that are convened to hold negotiations between conflict parties assisted by a third party, whereas the main actors involved can be summarized as the mediator and the negotiating parties. Mediators are actors who "assist two or more parties, with their consent, to prevent, manage or resolve a conflict by helping them to develop mutually acceptable agreements" (UN 2012) and the negotiating parties are actors traditionally seen as representatives of armed groups or governments engaged in armed conflict. However, this view is increasingly seen as narrow, as the mediation field has witnessed the increased relevance of civil society organizations, traditional leaders and business actors.

The literature on who mediates is wide, ranging from in-depth case studies and experiences of mediators to strategies and tactics for mediators to implement. Mediators are mandated by the United Nations, states, intergovernmental and sub-regional organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (Mason and Sguaitamatti 2011) and have different comparative advantages in terms of their political power, legitimacy, and flexibility when it comes to working with the negotiating parties (Lanz et al. 2009; Svensson and Onken 2015). There are increasing numbers of policy documents that place a normative imperative on mediators. *The UN Guidance for Effective Mediation* (UN 2012) and other manual-type policy documents written by regional organizations[4] and many nongovernmental organizations specializing in mediation[5] recommend that mediators take the viewpoints and needs of relevant stakeholders into consideration when designing their mediation process. This norm of 'inclusivity' has been salient in academic and policy mediation literature, and is largely understood as who gets a seat at the table (Lanz 2011; Paffenholz 2014; von Burg 2015). The discourse in the literature understands that the more inclusive peace processes are, the more sustainable, legitimate and implementable peace agreements will be. However, questions regarding who must be included, how many, where and when (Wanis and Kew 2008, Zanker 2014) remain[6].

Content

The content of mediation processes can be defined as the issues that the negotiating parties are struggling over. This pertains to the grievances, needs and desires of the negotiating parties. In mediation policy literature especially, content of peace negotiations is often grouped into five broad topics: security issues, justice and dealing with the past, power sharing, the economy and the management of natural resources, and social issues (Mason et al. 2015). These topics can be presented by parties as positions. Sometimes with the support of a mediator, these positions are organized into an agenda of topics for negotiation. The inclusion and exclusion of certain topics on the agenda can be extremely politically sensitive – while mediators and the negotiating parties must negotiate the agenda topics themselves before they can be discussed, the content of negotiations is entirely up to the parties to decide. Different agenda topics can also hold different

(4) Such as the African Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the European Union.
(5) Such as the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Conciliation Resources and swisspeace.
(6) The 'inclusivity' norm and the WPS Agenda are closely interlinked. However, to reduce confusion and conflation, this policy brief regards broadening participation among civil society actors related to 'inclusivity' and issues surrounding the WPS Agenda related to 'gender.' It is important to distinguish between the norm of inclusivity more broadly and the gender norms surrounding women's participation and the gender sensitivity of peace agreements. Inclusivity refers to "the extent and manner in which the views and needs of conflict parties and other stakeholders are represented and integrated into the process and outcome of a mediation effort" (UN 2012). While the WPS Agenda can be considered part of this push for mediation engagements to move towards inclusive dialogues involving larger segments of society, it calls for an arguably more specific notion of inclusivity. At times, the conceptual relationship between inclusivity, gender, women and civil society becomes conflated, both in policy and in practice.

political and technical weight, and can therefore be prioritized. For example, negotiations towards stopping violence via brokering a ceasefire are often the first step in peace negotiations, before negotiations on deep-seated political issues are addressed.

Process Design

The content of peace negotiations is closely linked to process design. Mediators can be tasked by the negotiating parties to design the process of negotiations. Mediation process design encompasses a complex and large number of variables, ranging from the structure of the talks (setting, format, timing, sequencing) to the type of mediation (make-up of the mediation team, role of the mediator, coordinating with other mediation actors), to the engagement of the mediator with the parties (confidence building, dealing with asymmetric power structures, working with donors, dealing with geopolitical factors). Due to the political and technical complexity of these factors, mediation processes are intricate and can last several years or even span across decades.

The push to make peace processes more inclusive also refers to the content of peace agreements. Inclusive peace agreements mean that clauses in draft or full peace agreement texts account for broader sectors of society, including women, civil society, children, and are not just power-sharing arrangements between the negotiating parties themselves. They can also refer to setting up inclusive post-agreement mechanisms such as ceasefire monitoring mechanisms or larger political or national dialogues. In terms of process design, mediation processes have also increasingly been understood as taking place simultaneously on multiple tracks: Track I processes take place between official representatives of negotiating parties, mandated by a formal mediator such as the United Nations, a representative of a state or a regional organization. Track II processes take place between influential representatives of nongovernmental organisations and other decision-makers in communities. Track III processes take place at the grassroots level (Diamond and McDonald 1996).

Linking Mediation to Gender: A Gap in the Literature

The academic and policy literature on mediation does not have a strong or consistent nexus to gender. Academic literature that focuses on material and contextual factors leading to successful peace agreements or analyses the content of mediation processes themselves are largely quantitative research projects. This can result in 'gender-blind' research findings that do not disaggregate social factors by gender. The literature tends to focus on strategies, decision-making processes and game theories, sometimes underpinned by the assumption that negotiations are zero-sum, impersonal and apolitical strategies (Palmiano 2014). While policy literature on mediation increasingly addresses gender-sensitive peace processes in terms of participation and the content of peace agreements, these are largely seen as an additional construct to consider in peace mediation processes, at its best as an underpinning factor and at its worst a 'box' to tick in terms of process design to cater to the requests of donors or advocacy groups.

3. Understanding Gender

What is gender? Gender is a deeply complex concept that has its roots in feminist theory and politics. A proper treatment of the term is far beyond the scope of this policy brief. Thus, for the purposes of understanding gender in relation to mediation, the policy brief sees gender as the

historically constructed roles of men and women that permeate all social institutions and practices (Mason et al. 2015; Palmiano Federer 2016). These socially constructed roles can result in power asymmetries between men and women in all contexts, including situations of armed conflict and the efforts to resolve them. Therefore, applying a 'gender lens' by qualitatively and quantitatively disaggregating the experiences of men and women can result in new insights into peacemaking policy and practice.

Academic and Policy Literature

The academic and policy literature on gender is rich and far-reaching. This policy brief focuses on gender literature related to conflict resolution. This sub-field of literature can be grouped into three broad categories: academic literature on gender and international relations (Cohn 2013; Stern and Zalewski 2009); selected academic feminist theories on gender (Butler 1990; Mouffe 1992; Enloe 2014); and peacebuilding policy literature on gender and peacemaking (Potter Prentice 2004; Anderlini 2007).

Firstly, feminist literature disaggregates the experiences of men and women and establishes a "feminist standpoint" (Hartsock 1998) that has fed into ground-breaking empirical research on militarisation, roles in conflict, and peacemaking (McKay and Mazurana 2004; Carpenter 2006; Cohn 2013). As it is conceptual and theoretical in nature, the roots of gender lie in feminist theory distinguishing between sex and gender (West and Zimmerman 1987; Butler 1990; Hartsock 1998; Enloe 2014) but with a range of pioneering and critical contributions in the field of security studies and peacebuilding.

Secondly, the disaggregation of social experiences in conflict and post-conflict settings found in academic literature on gender and international relations reveals an essentialist dichotomy: based on the assumption that men 'make' war, women (who possess 'essentially' different attributes and qualities) consequently make peace. This 'women and peace hypothesis' (Maoz 2009) maintains that women have the tendency to hold more peaceful attitudes towards conflicts and are less likely to use violence to settle them. This hypothesis has been widely debated among scholars and practitioners who press that women are not agents of peace, but can also be perpetrators as violence. These dualities are well documented in a growing scholarly and practical interest in women who fight in armed groups (McKay and Mazurana 2004).

Thirdly, the peacebuilding policy literature on gender and peacemaking can contain a 'women's rights' underpinning based on gender equality: "Women have the right to engage and benefit from decision-making on equal terms with men" (Keller and Wildt 2012). Policy literature on gender and peacemaking that is written from a rights-based approach is based on the premise that women and men are equally actors for change in both conflict and peace. Given the observed reality that women are starkly underrepresented in mediation processes and negotiation (UN 2012), policy literature with a rights-based approach focuses on the marginalization and the underrepresentation of women as a foundational starting point.

Linking Gender to Mediation: A Gap in the Literature

There are two ways in which the literature on gender lacks a viable nexus to the literature on peace mediation. The first is the normative and pragmatic approach: some feminist interventions on women and peacemaking largely focus on women's rights while others focus on purely pragmatic approaches for women's inclusion based on arguments of effectiveness. These two approaches

need not be mutually exclusive, and may aggregate more value when combined as a focus of study (Palmiano 2014). The second is that policy literature on gender focuses on women, rather than the disaggregated experiences of women and men in conflict and peace. While academic literature in masculinity studies have recently taken this up (Carpenter 2006), there is still a dearth of policy literature and recommendations on the topic. Because of the rights-based approach and the specific focus on women, there is difficulty bridging the divide over to the field of mediation, which is largely technical albeit deeply politicized, and applies inclusivity to broader sections of actors rather than specific notions of gender.

4. The WPS Agenda: The Nexus between Gender and Mediation

As established above, there is a lack of a comprehensive and sustained nexus between academic and policy literature between mediation and gender. However, within the last 20 years, the WPS Agenda has attempted to bridge these two fields, both conceptually and pragmatically. This agenda was borne out of decades of activism by women's rights organizations and civil society groups advocating for strategic peacebuilding actors, such as the United Nations, to recognize the gendered impacts of armed conflicts especially on women. They also pushed for the increased meaningful and multi-dimensional role of women in peacemaking processes.

The WPS Agenda is a broad normative construct at the global level that is manifested nationally through existing policies or National Action Plans (NAPs) on 1325. The agenda features four main pillars: participation, prevention, protection and peacebuilding (UN Women 2012). It is also manifested in practice, with groups supporting mediation processes from a distance, often at a local level[7] providing guidance to mediators and their teams on how to incorporate gender sensitivity and a proactive gendered-approach to their mediation strategies and process designs. The WPS Agenda consists of the following legal and political instruments:

- The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1999) is a human rights treaty for women which entered into force in 1981 and is supported by 188 states. It is based on the principles of non-discrimination and equality and features General Recommendations for states, the most relevant to gender and mediation being General Recommendation 30. This recommendation focuses on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.

- Beijing Platform for Action (1995) was a conference resulting in a policy framework for action on the WPS Agenda that featured commitments agreed to by 189 states. It sought to ensure equal access and participation of women in power structures and efforts for the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

- United Nations Security Council Resolutions:

  o UN SCR 1325 (2000): considered a watershed instrument, as it is comprehensive and binding for all member states of the United Nations. It urges on member states to adopt a gendered worldview on conflict, namely that conflict affects men, women, boys and girls differently and requires tailored

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(7) Examples of these groups are women's advocacy organizations, coalitions, civil society groups, human rights organizations and donor organizations.

responses. It is rights-based, rooted in gender and equality and women's rights as a standard in peace in conflict. Particularly, it characterizes sexual violence as a tactic of warfare and a central international security concern.

o   UN SCR 1820 (2008): links sexual violence explicitly to peace and security and deems it a tactic of war and a crime against humanity.

o   UN SCR 1888 (2009): reinforces resolutions 1325 and 1820, and calls for the strengthened monitoring and reporting on sexual violence, as well as the increased participation of women in national security forces and as peacekeepers.

o   UN SCR 1889 (2009): addresses obstacles to women's participation in peace processes.

o   UN SCR 1960 (2010): focuses on sexual violence as an agenda topic during peace negotiations, and urges the systematic monitoring and reporting of sexual violence as a war crime.

o   UN SCR 2105 (2013): reaffirms commitment from previous resolutions and highlight promoting justice and accountability for sexual violence in conflict.

o   UN SCR 2122 (2013): puts in place a roadmap for a more systematic approach to the implementation of commitments on women, peace and security. It highlights the critical importance of gender equality and women's empowerment to international peace and security.

This normative framework is extremely broad. Thus, a comprehensive analysis of each of these frameworks falls beyond the scope of this policy brief. However, the most relevant elements of the WPS Agenda in gender and mediation is UN SCR 1325, which explicitly calls to increase the participation of women in conflict resolution and peace processes.

UNSCR 1325 Operational Clause 8.c.:"refers to the adoption of a gender perspective in peace negotiations and peace agreements, including measures that support local women's peace initiatives and that involve women in all the implementation mechanisms of peace agreements."

Therefore, the two salient gender norms in international peace mediation can be summarized as (1) increasing women's meaningful participation in peace processes and (2) increasing the gender sensitivity of peace agreements (Palmiano Federer 2016).

The prominence of these gender norms in mediation is growing and is evidenced by the increased attention from both peacebuilding and women's rights organizations, foreign ministries, and international organizations. Despite the normative and pragmatic pull of the WPS Agenda, the question of *how* to integrate gender into mediation processes remains subject to intense debate among practitioners and analysts, sometimes drawing a divide between those 'doing' mediation and those supporting mediation processes from a distance. Promoting the WPS Agenda in mediation processes is also bolstered by the overall trend of more inclusive and broader processes, moving away from the classical elite peace table.

5. The State of Play of the WPS Agenda in International Peace Mediation

Actors

For many years, including (more) women at the peace table has been the priority for advocates of gender equality. The push to get female mediators as well as more gender-balanced negotiating parties and delegations has only been partially successful, with still a minimal number of women acting as UN Envoys and mediation team members. Parties have been slightly more progressive and some contexts, such as the Philippine peace process, have demonstrated the advantages of mixed delegations that display a high level of gender parity in decision-making roles. It is nevertheless more the exception than the norm. In addition to pushing for more women, pushing for the quality of representation has also progressed during the last decade. Indeed, the concept of having a 'meaningful participation of women' in peace negotiations, as opposed to merely appointing 'token women', has progressed. This means, for instance having women leading delegations and mediation teams or acting in senior positions at the peace table. Combining 'quality and quantity' has thus been the new avenue to move gender forward in peace processes. It is also important to underline that having women at the peace table does not mean that they will push for a gender sensitive approach in the process or will advocate for 'women's issues.' Having men championing gender approaches as well as having mixed commissions are also ways to explore meaningful participation.

An increasing number of peace supporters reinforce the importance of valuing participation not only at the classical peace table but 'around' it: enlarging the influence on decisions linked to peace is based on the recognition that current peace negotiations do not take place in an elite, closed circle. Today, the idea of 'national dialogues', multiple negotiation tracks taking place in parallel, several tables or working groups complementing each other has been increasingly accepted and offers great opportunities to foster women's participation. Giving value to women's formal and informal roles in mediation processes and their complementarity seem to provide more space for women's contributions.

Process

Issues surrounding process design, particularly how to design inclusive mediation processes, have occupied mediators for decades. The notion of inclusive mediation processes has been linked to the inclusion of women especially, even if most actors recognise that the notion of inclusivity is much larger than 'only' including women. Indeed, inclusivity is also about 'extremist' groups or youth, minorities, and other excluded voices. Inclusivity is not only about actors but also about topics, and in this vein, the gender dimension is fundamental. Offering space for discussing issues that may be specific to one gender group or paying attention to the gender dimension of all topics debated during peace processes is a difficult but crucial exercise in practice. Again, mediators may face dilemmas in finding the right balance between protecting a mediation space that is often already small and fragile and fostering debates around key topics necessary for societal transformation. The 'who', 'how', and 'what' of mediation processes are fundamental questions to consider when designing an inclusive process. Usually the idea of sequencing helps mediators to organise their process and allow them to integrate different actors at different moments. Ideally, mediation processes have a complementarity of actors and approach boosting a peace process forward.

Several options have been attempted to enlarge peace processes and bring diverse voices to the negotiations (Paffenholz 2004). For instance, several parallel working groups can be set up where different actors (not only negotiating parties) could discuss and exchange. Guatemala and Afghanistan in 2001 are interesting examples of that model (Paffenholz 2014). In a similar vein, consultative mechanisms can be set up to feed into a principal process.

Content

Questions around sexual violence tend to dominate the burgeoning research and policy work around integrating a gender dimension into classical topics or agenda items in peace talks. Sexual violence in armed conflict is undeniably crucial and deserves adequate attention and nuanced responses[8]. Nevertheless, there are many other issues around security, gender and peace negotiations that would also deserve attention. Some of these include security related topics surrounding disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration, security sector reform, and ceasefire monitoring. Other topics often discussed in peace negotiations such as transitional justice, power sharing, natural resources and numerous are nearly gender blind in their negotiation dimension (Buchanan et al. 2012).

Content also refers to what topics make it to the peace agreement and how they are referenced. There has already been research and discussion on gender sensitive peace agreements (Bell and O'Rourke 2010), but a causal link between women's participation and the gender-sensitivity of peace agreements must be better understood.

6. The WPS Agenda: Case Studies

The following cases illustrate how the WPS Agenda has manifested in different peace processes around the world. The cases do not attempt to show 'best practice,' but to illustrate the importance of context specificity when thinking about gender and mediation; one case does not fit all.

Participation and Finding an Entry Point: The Case of Guatemala

The Guatemalan peace process highlights the 'participation' aspect of the WPS Agenda. In 1996, a 36-year long civil war between leftist, Mayan insurgents (the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit) and the Government ended with the signing of peace agreements. Over the course of the civil war, more than 200 000 people (most of them civilians) were killed or disappeared. Although the war has ended, society inequality, poverty, illiteracy, infant mortality, and organized crime and street gangs are still major issues within the country (BBC 2016).

Women's groups gained an entry point to the negotiations to the 1996 peace agreement through the willingness of the third-party mediator, then UN Special Representative of the Secretary General, Jean Arnault. Representing the UN and its broad normative framework on mediation, he consulted actively with civil society groups and women's groups as part of his mandate. This ensured that

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(8)Gender-based violence is also not merely a weapon of war in intrastate conflict. It can also be viewed as a structural issue within the domestic and 'private' sphere (see swisspeace's Women, Peace Security Reloaded, 2016).

women's demands were brought to the peace table and a large number of those got into the peace agreements concluded in 1996. Luz Mendez, one of the female negotiators, served as another entry point to women's meaningful participation, both in terms of physical representation and on content. She was one of two women negotiators in the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Party and the government team. Luz Mendez would share important information and her experience at the peace table back to women's groups. These women's groups in turn would feed their inputs back to the mediator through Luz Mendez[9].

While a causal claim cannot be made through the presence of a female negotiator who continuously looped content back and forth within and outside the peace talks, the Guatemalan peace agreement contains gender-sensitive provisions and explicitly mentions women, including indigenous women and the roles that they play maintaining peace.

Parallel Processes and Consultative Mechanisms: The Case of Aceh

The Aceh peace process illustrates the role of parallel processes and consultative mechanism in furthering the WPS Agenda in practice. Many in Aceh trace the conflict back to 1949 when the Dutch recognized Indonesian independence – Aceh became part of the Republic of Indonesia despite not having been formally incorporated into the Dutch colonies. The Indonesian Government used armed groups to annex the region, creating resentment among the local population. Despite a special status and certain concessions for religious and educational matters (e.g. Aceh was allowed to introduce Sharia law in 2001), many Acehnese continued to represent Indonesian rule. This was exacerbated by the region's rich oil and gas resources, which were used by the central government, and the policy of transmigration in which many incoming Indonesians increased competition for jobs (BBC 2005).

Rebels from the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) took up arms against the Indonesian government and only in 2005 a peace agreement was signed after 26 years of a bitter separatist campaign. The decades-long conflict left almost 15 000 people, mainly civilians, dead. The Aceh Peace Agreement was signed after six months of negotiations with mediator and former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari. After rounds of negotiations and a collapsed deal in 2003, both sides resolved to come to an agreement in the wake of the tsunami that devastated the Indian Ocean in December 2004 (ibidem).

Several process design elements illustrate the WPS Agenda in the Aceh peace process. Firstly, women in Aceh used parallel processes as an entry point to the peace talks. They held two Acehnese Women's Conferences. Initially, no women were represented in the peace negotiations. After the two conferences, they brought their demands to the Government of Aceh and the Agency for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh and Nias (following the 2004 tsunami) and had five out of their 11 demands were included in the agreement. Secondly, the Aceh process involved a gender advisor who drew on these demands and developed a gender policy for the recovery of Aceh including land distribution for widows and single women. Thirdly, women also utilized a strong support network of women's groups in the region, such as the Sisters of Islam. Fourthly, Shadia Marbahan, the only female negotiator at the peace talks, garnered international support for greater inclusion of women in peace processes by speaking about the process at international conferences and various women's forums.[10]

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(9) Adapted from swisspeace's Training of Trainers Manual, 2015.
(10) Adapted from swisspeace's Training of Trainers Manual, 2015.

Political Participation and Peace Processes: The Case of Northern Ireland

The peace process leading up to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland illustrates how existing classical political structures created space for women's participation in the peace talks. The conflict, with a particular period that lasted for decades known as 'The Troubles,' began in the 1960s when the Catholic community stepped up a campaign for equal rights, as they felt they were being systematically discriminated by the unionist-dominated parliament. However, some unionists felt that Protestant dominance was under threat. Tension spilled into violence and, in 1972, the British government imposed direct rule. Violence increased, and paramilitary groups engaged in deadly violence that resulted in over 3000 deaths – mostly civilians. The 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement allowed Dublin to enter the debate about the conflict, and by the early 1990s, both London and Dublin began multi-party talks. Ceasefires and months of negotiations lead to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (BBC 2012).

Women formed a political party across conflict lines called the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition to enter into the peace talks. They contested the elections and winning one percent of the votes, they gained two seats at the negotiating table where they put forward an all-woman, cross-community team (Fearon 2013). They also won seats, and used this entry point to negotiate the reintegration of political prisoners and mediate across conflict lines.

The Role of the Mediator and his team: The Case of Kenya

The 2007–08 Kenyan crisis was a political, economic, and humanitarian crisis that erupted after incumbent President Mwai Kibaki was declared the winner of the presidential election held in December 2007. Supporters of Kibaki's opponent, Raila Odinga, alleged electoral manipulation, which was widely confirmed by international observers. The crisis seemed to take place among ethnic lines and resulted in the death of more than a thousand persons and left 600,000 people displaced. Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan arrived in the country about a month after the election and successfully brought the two sides to the negotiating table. On February 28, 2008, Kibaki and Odinga signed a power-sharing agreement called the National Accord and Reconciliation Act 2008, which established the office of the Prime Minister and created a coalition government.

This process is a good example of the difference that a mediator can make when (s)he decides to take the gender dimension seriously. Kofi Annan gathered a team of mediators and advisors to assist political leaders in negotiating a settlement and an end to the violence. During the mediation, women were well-represented and played crucial roles as negotiators and advisors. Led by former Mozambican politician Graça Machel as an eminent adviser, two lead negotiators, as well as two additional female advisors participated in the mediation team. These women also sought to include more women on both sides of the table to represent the conflicting parties. They also reached out to civil society groups, particularly to women's movements, all along the process to ensure their voices were heard. Many observers underlined the importance of having a woman in the mediation team (at senior level and not only as a gender expert) as well as having regular meetings with women groups all along the process as a good way to have better gender-sensitive processes.

Gender-Sensitive Peace Architecture & Process Design: The Case of Colombia

The Colombian conflict began nearly 60 years ago and is a low-intensity asymmetric war between the Colombian government, paramilitary groups, crime syndicates, and left-wing guerrillas such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and the National Liberation Army (ELN), fighting each other to increase their influence in Colombia. Around 220,000 people have died in the conflict between the 1960s and 2013, most of them civilians and more than five million civilians were forced from their homes. On 23 June 2016, the Colombian government and the FARC rebels signed a historic ceasefire deal, bringing them closer to ending more than five decades of conflict. However, on October 2, 2016, a small majority of the Colombian public rejected the deal.

In 2014, the government of Colombia and the FARC announced a new sub-commission on gender in the peace process, tasked with ensuring that the agreements had an "adequate" gender focus. Eight topics were included in the sub-commission: access to rural property for women; guarantees of the economic, social and cultural rights of women and "persons with diverse sexual orientations and identities;" promotion of women's participation in representation, decision-making and conflict resolution; prevention of risks specific to women; access to truth and justice, and measures to counter impunity; public recognition, dissemination and countering of stigmatization of women's political work; institutional action to strengthen women's organizations and disaggregation of data by gender (Bouvier 2016).

While the sub-commission represented a key advancement of the WPS Agenda in the peace process, observers pointed out that attention to how intersectionality, or how "gender intersects with race, class and ethnicity, especially with respect to the experiences of Afro-Colombian and indigenous groups" is also key (ibidem). The experiences of men in conflict should also not be forgotten, as "gender is about men, too. The Colombian approach focuses not only on sex and gender identities, but also on sexual preferences and orientations and the ways in which these create or enhance vulnerabilities to forms of violence" (Krystalli 2016). The peace process also saw the creation of a special unit to investigate sexual violence cases as part of the transitional justice measures supported by the Colombian gender sub-commission (ibidem).

The Colombian case shows the value of specific sub-commissions on gender and underlines that several paths have be explored in parallel to address differences of needs, impacts and roles in peace and conflict. For many observers, the implementation phase may bring additional challenges as well.

7. National Action Plans on 1325

Background and Context

A National Action Plan (NAP) is a government document that outlines its national strategy to implement UN SCR 1325 and other instruments within the WPS Agenda. It is meant to outline specific actions, initiatives and timelines needed to meet obligations contained in UN SCR 1325, from recommendations on the meaningful inclusion of women in peace and conflict related decisions, preventing and addressing sexual violence, coordination with civil society, and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation (Zakharova 2012; OSCE 2014). After the adoption of UN SCR 1325 in 2000, the UN Security Council "encourage[d] all Member States… and other relevant actors to

develop clear strategies and action plans" that contained targeted activities, goals and timetables that focused on women and girls in post-conflict situations in its 2002 Presidential Statement (S/PRST/2002/32). Through two more Presidential statements in 2004 (S/PRST/2004/40) and 2005 (S/PRST/2005/52), the UN SCR maintained its support in implementing UN SCR 1325 through national action plans and other national level strategies. As of May 2016, 60 states have created a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. These include Afghanistan, Argentina, Japan, New Zealand, and Paraguay most recently in 2015. Algeria, Angola, Brazil, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Latvia, Portugal, Thailand, Ukraine and Tanzania have committed to develop a NAP in 2016 (PeaceWomen 2016).

Key overseeing bodies that have published large scale monitoring and evaluation studies on NAPs (OSCE 2014; UN Women 2015; PeaceWomen 2016) list several ways of creating and implementing NAPs. Firstly, member states can implement the WPS Agenda based on their country's specific contexts and needs. NAPs can take different shapes and forms: they can be national or regional action plans, or focus on different thematic commitments, create specific localization strategies, or highlight particular national policies. For example, regional organizations such as the European Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the African Union, and the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries have adopted regional policies and plans on the WPS Agenda (Zakharova 2012). NAPs can have varying degrees of civil society partnerships for playing monitoring and evaluation roles. NAPs can be integrated into existing national policy frameworks, while risking tokenism and merely 'ticking the gender box' may require fewer resources. NAPs can also exist as stand-alone policies, while risking duplication and more resources may render them easier to monitor progress and challenges. The development process of a NAP can also vary widely, either being quickly developed and passed as national policy, or go through lengthy consultation processes to generate more support and roles for different actors, especially for implementation. Thematically, strategies, specific initiatives and actions can fall under the three broad categories of the WPS Agenda: participation in peace processes and decision-making; prevention of conflict; protection of women during and after conflict; and peacebuilding that engages women and addresses their specific needs in relief and recovery (Zakharova 2012).

A recent OSCE Study (2014) on the implementation of NAPs cites several common advantages of creating and implementing NAPs: they provide oversight and comprehensiveness of carrying out all elements of the WPS Agenda; they allow for the coordination of several government agencies working on the WPS Agenda and avoid duplication of efforts; they raise awareness of the WPS Agenda to government and civil society; they create higher levels of ownership and accountability of government actors; they play important monitoring and evaluation roles of policy; and can improve military operational effectiveness through enhancing awareness and knowledge of specific security threats inter alia others (OSCE 2014: 28-31).

The Limits and Challenges of Implementing NAPs

Despite the spread of NAP on 1325 through 60 member states since its conception 16 years ago, the progress of the WPS Agenda is also beset with challenges. NAP monitoring mechanisms list multiple lessons learned. Firstly, NAPs must be designed holistically in a balanced manner, and not leave thematic gaps, such as demilitarisation and disarmament. Secondly, NAPs must also balance the focus on external activities such has peacekeeping with internal domestic concerns (what issues should be included and what can be excluded?). Another challenge is coordination with civil society actors (who represents civil society? How are partners selected?). Thirdly, monitoring and evaluation was listed as a key challenge, in terms of conducting baseline studies, creating effective indicators, and laying out clear roles and responsibilities (OSCE 2014, PeaceWomen

2016; Humanitarian Advisory Group 2015).

NAPS also face important limitations and weaknesses. Firstly, NAPS can be very broad and superficial, covering too many categories for action without strategic specificity. Including indicators can remedy this weakness, but identifying strong indicators can be conceptually difficult to define and possibly politically sensitive. Secondly, strategies, action plans and indicators must be followed up by clear budget lines and earmarking. Securing consistent budget lines can be a broad challenge in itself. Thirdly, NAPs face important regionalisation and localisation challenges. How much can national level plans and indicators, for example, capture the varying needs of different regions and local communities in a given country? How can national level plans and indicators find out the competencies of communities and what they can provide in terms of implementation? Conceptually, the main pillars of the WPS (participation, prevention, protection and peacebuilding) can mean very different things at the community level. It may be difficult for NAPs in some contexts to capture these regional and local nuances and not ignore or displace them (swisspeace 2016).

Linking NAPs to Peace Mediation

Linking a NAP to peace mediation begins with conceptually defining what conflict and mediation mean in a given context. The relevant stakeholders must also be identified. These categories are broad and risk being defined in a Western-centric manner. Therefore, they must be redefined and adapted to the national, regional and local context.

For instance, the nature of conflict and the power relations between actors can vary. In some contexts, relevant actors are negotiating parties that have 'seats' in formal mediation processes. They can be representatives of armed groups or a government. In other contexts, with no clearly defined mediation space, conflict lines and relevant actors can be more difficult to identify. This may have an impact on the efficient development of NAPs. The meaning of peace mediation can also vary widely in regional and local contexts.

However mediation is defined, it must be contextualized where stakeholders and responsibilities are identified. It must also be considered whether and how NAPs are the best vehicles to create a practical nexus between gender and peace mediation. Because of the strength of the normative framework of the WPS Agenda, there is a risk of placing too many expectations on NAPs to move the agenda forward. NAPs can also be seen as a complementary approach to other initiatives including research and working at local and regional levels. When a NAP is overloaded, it jeopardizes the possibility of effective implementation. In some cases, the process of developing a NAP can be just as important as the policies themselves. The process itself can be used as vehicle for reflection and discussion and provide a space to launch further conversations around mediation and gender.

8. Conclusion

The nexus between gender and mediation has become an important topic in peacebuilding. Its salience in the field is illustrated by the growing body of research, policy and practice on the WPS Agenda and NAPs on 1325. However, three lines of future research are sorely needed. The first is empirical research that identifies how policies regarding women's participation links to gender-sensitive peace agreements, which in turn arguably links to more implementable and sustainable peace agreements. The causal link between women's participation and sustainable

peace agreements must be identified and better understood. Current research can be anecdotal and normative, which makes it difficult for literature to speak with academic scholarship or certain types of policymaking. The second is moving past gender and mediation as the question of participation, but going deeper into complex questions regarding power sharing and gender. The third would be more conceptual and empirical research on men, boys and masculinities. The WPS Agenda could then encompass gender understood as women, men, girls and boys – perhaps a 'Gender, Peace and Security' Agenda could be a future trajectory of these debates.

There is also a need to discuss and debate the role of NAPs in furthering the agenda on mediation. What does mediation mean in different contexts and do NAPs further the mediation agenda, especially in countries that are not involved in mediation nor in conflict? How do mediators and mediation support actors navigate normative and practical dilemmas in mediation, especially within a politically shrinking space? What is the role of negotiating parties and the role of a peace mediator in thinking about NAPs? How can NAPs create ideas and avenues for effective change rather than reduce space and understanding between peace process actors? While these questions may be difficult to answer and the answers may be even more difficult to implement, thinking about gender and mediation is important in working towards equitable, more legitimate and more effective peace processes.

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