

Strengthening African Women's Participation in Conflict Prevention,
Mediation Processes and Peace Stabilisation Efforts

Operationalisation of "FemWise-Africa"

GENERAL INFORMATION

Implementation Period: 2018-2020

1. Background:

The role of women and the gender dimensions of conflict remain marginal in conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction processes, despite several resolutions, such as United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, and commitments made to increase women's participation in mediation and peace processes. At the continental level, while Africa has made significant progress towards gender equality and protection of women's rights at the policy level - with the adoption of various legal instruments, as well as their realization at the national, regional and continental level, implementation is largely lacking.

The absence of and lack of African women's participation in formal mediation processes and at the peace table, in particular, is an important area of the 1325 agenda that remains poorly implemented. In addition, women's significant contribution to and strong role in sub-national and local mediation and conflict prevention initiatives continues to be largely unrecognized and weakly supported.

There is no doubt that women should take an integral part in decision-making during peace processes. In order to contribute to an increase in women's access to and participation in peace mediation and negotiation in Africa, women's capacity in mediation and negotiation skills needs to be improved and extended to all areas of work including security sector reform, financing and power-sharing; the impact of conflict on women and their role in peace processes need to be better exposed and reflected on; and the implementation of various policies related to Women, Peace and Security needs to be accelerated and monitored. A comprehensive response from all stakeholders is necessary to ensure gains made are not reversed.

Against this backdrop, the African Union (AU) has taken three landmark decisions¹, ultimately leading to the establishment of the **FemWise-Africa (Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation)**. FemWise-Africa aims to strengthen the role of women in conflict prevention and mediation efforts in the context of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The Network provides a platform for strategic advocacy, capacity building and networking aimed at enhancing the implementation of the commitments for women's inclusion in peacemaking in Africa.

2. FemWise-Africa: Overview

In 2010, the Panel of the Wise of the AU decided to initiate a long-term study and action plan to eradicate sexual violence against women and children in armed conflicts. One of the key recommendations in the ensuing report required the AU to take action by establishing a formal

¹ The 2010 Decision of the Peace and Security Council asking the Panel of the Wise to undertake a study on Women in armed conflicts; the 2014 Decision of Ministers of Gender calling for the creation of an association of women in mediation; the 13 March 2017 Decision of the PSC to create FemWise.

network of women in mediation pegged to relevant AU organs to monitor and influence decision making. It was against this backdrop that the AU Peace and Security Department with the support of UN Women commissioned a study to map existing networks and associations working on women's participation in mediation. In the basis of this study, draft modalities were developed for the Network.

In December 2016, the Pan-African Network of the Wise (PANWISE) in collaboration with UN Women and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) convened the African Women Mediation Workshop on the theme "Silencing the Guns by 2020: Women's Inclusion in Pre-Conflict Mediation, at the Peace table and in Social Cohesion" in Constantine, Algeria. The workshop brought together over 80 women (and men) from 24 African countries involved in track 1, 2 and 3 mediation processes and conflict prevention and social cohesion activities in Africa to share experiences, identify challenges and barriers to women's active participation and discuss strategies to accelerate women's agency in these efforts. The focus and form of the network were discussed and recommendations developed to inform the finalization of the modalities for the network.

On 13 March 2017, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) endorsed the modalities for the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation, officially referred to as **FemWise-Africa**. Additional endorsement was given to FemWise-Africa by the UN Security Council on 27 March 2017 in New York as part of an Arria Formula meeting. Lastly, FemWise-Africa was officially established through a decision of the AU Assembly of Heads of State (AU Summit) on 4 July 2017 (**Assembly/AU/Draft/Dec.21(XXIX)**).

The Network is located within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), as a subsidiary mechanism of the Panel of the Wise and the PANWISE. Its location within the APSA places it in a strategic position for policy formulation and advocacy for narrowing the gap between the commitments for women's inclusion and the implementation. Membership of FemWise is open to both institutions and individual women.

3. Structure of FemWise-Africa:

The structure of FemWise-Africa includes the FemWise-Africa Steering Committee, the FemWise-Africa Assembly, and the FemWise-Africa Secretariat. The Steering Committee, which is co-chaired by **Her Excellency Catherine Samba Panza**, former President of the Central African Republic and **Her Excellency Dr. Speciosa Wandira**, the First African Woman Vice-President (Uganda), gives strategic guidance to the Secretariat and provides reflection on the activities of the Network, reviews and approves membership accreditation applications.

The Steering Committee provides inputs to the annual work plans of the Network. The Committee includes as core members: the Panel of the Wise, counter parts from the RECs, the Peace and Security Department and ten pre-selected women mediators with proven mediation skills (2 per region). Associate members, without voting privileges, are relevant Departments and Directorates of the Commission (Office of the Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security, the Gender Directorate, etc), UN Women country office, ACCORD, the Africa Leadership Centre, and, as necessary, thematic experts to provide regular substantive guidance and advice to the Secretariat of FemWise.

The Assembly is made up of all members of the Network; responsible for approving annual work plans and a regular platform for the exchange of lessons learned and best practices), which will meet at least once a year and at any other time as may be deemed necessary to validate and adopt the annual Action Plan of the Network. It should be recalled that Members of the FemWise-Africa may include women and girls who have served and aspire to serve in preventive actions and mediation activities, drawn from a variety of different backgrounds

The Secretariat of FemWise is based at the African Union Commission Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, within the Peace and Security Department (PSD). The Secretariat coordinates, harmonizes and monitors the activities of the Network and tables annual and other reports on the activities of the Network through relevant structures within PSD, and to the Panel of the Wise through PanWise. The members of the network can request operational technical support from the Network through the Secretariat, and the Secretariat will coordinate the response and support in consultation with the AU and RECs/RMs. The Secretariat is responsible for managing the Network's relations with other pillars of APSA, the African Governance Architecture (AGA) and the AU Gender Architecture, training, research and policy institutions and any other categories of relevant stakeholders as shall be determined by the Network. The Secretariat shall furthermore implement the Network's communication and outreach strategy. The Secretariat shall perform any other duties as may be articulated by the AU Chairperson, the PSC, Network members or any other appropriate stakeholders.

4. Accredited Members of FemWise-Africa

Creating all-inclusive networks means tapping into the clout and visibility of high-level or leading women mediators and the wealth of expertise embedded in women mediation experts. The richness in integrated teams is unmatched, taking advantage of various competencies that are unique to each category. FemWise-Africa already includes approximately eighty (80) members, which feature some of the following distinguished personalities, experts and youth:

Graca Machel (Mozambique), Mme Brigalia Bam (South Africa), Marie-Madeline Kalala-Ngoy (DRC), Mary Chinery-Hesse (Ghana), Mme Hortense Nzet Biteghé (Gabon), Louisa Diogo (Mozambique), Elisabeth Pognon (Benin), Salimata Porquet (Cote d'Ivoire), Betty Bigombe (Uganda), Florence Mpaayei (Kenya), Bishop Mary Nkosi (Malawi), Liberata MulaMula (Tanzania), Ambassador Hawa Ahmed Youssouf (Djibouti), Amb. Josephine Mayuma Kala (DRC), Louise Baricako (Burundi), Stella Sabiitii (Uganda), Amb. Sahle-Work Zewde (Ethiopia), Mrs. Hiroute Guebre Sellassie (Ethiopia), Amb Soad Shalaby (Egypt), Dr. Nana Pratt (Sierra Leone), Hon. Ms. Martha Karua (Kenya), etc.

Youth leaders already accredited include: Fatima Askira (Nigeria), Ms. Emily Amony (Uganda), Ms. Shuvai Busuman Nyoni (Kenya), Mireille Tushiminina(DRC), Irene Limo (Kenya) etc.

Synergies-building and cooperation are a must for the networks to succeed. As long as these networks are seen as platforms and collaborative initiatives for women's regular encounter and for co-learning, any challenges will be overcome.

And these synergies must be maintained not only internally within the network, but also across to embrace other networks. It is the intention of FemWise-Africa to actively promote and nurture close North-South such as with the **Network of Nordic Women Mediators**, and we look forward to rich collaboration with the **Mediterranean Women Mediators Network** as well as the **Women Mediation Network for the Commonwealth Countries**, once established. We also seek South-South collaborative partnerships and relationships with the networks of the **women platforms of Colombia** who played a key role in the peace process, and we look to intensify our collaboration with the **Asia regional women's networks**.

Building synergies also extends to agencies such as the UN who have played supportive roles during the process of building FemWise-Africa. UN Women has been a constant partner in this and other initiatives, providing accompanying expertise and in the design of initiatives as well as in capacity-enhancement. FemWise-Africa looks to a rich collaboration with the UNDP, the Mediation Support Unit (MSU) specifically, in the form of sharing important databank resources and rosters and with UN Environment (UNEP) to look at the causes and impact of natural resource based conflicts on local communities especially in border areas, which are known to be geographically vulnerable.

5. Priorities of FemWise-Africa:

Drawing on deliberations that took place in the Constantine meeting, the briefing to the PSC, the UNSC, and the Assembly, FemWise-Africa priorities were formulated as:

1. Professionalizing the role of women in preventive diplomacy and mediation at Tracks 1, 2 and 3 levels;

2. Ensuring a channel for women's meaningful and effective participation in peace processes, including as heads of official high-level mediation missions;
3. Initiating women's action that will catalyse and mainstream the engagement of women in mediation in line with the African Union's "Agenda 2063" and the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
4. Bridging the gap between Tracks 1, 2 and 3 mediation and synergizing efforts towards inclusive peace processes with sustainable outcomes.
5. Strengthening the mediation interventions of FemWise-Africa with the facilitation of Quick Impact Projects and the establishment of local and national peace infrastructures as foundations and Launchpad for medium and longer term initiatives that will ensure that stability and development take root.

6. Expected Outcomes

Overall Goal: Peace processes in Africa are shaped by women's leadership and participation

Outcome 1: The women's movement in Africa is mobilized and brought together to foster women's participation and contribution to conflict prevention, mediation and peace stabilization

Outcome 2: Conducive environment for women's leadership and participation in peace processes created at different levels in Africa

Outcome 3: Enhanced capacity of African women engaged in conflict prevention and mediation to ensure their engagement and influence in conflict prevention, mediation and peace stabilization efforts

Outcome 4: Enhanced synergy between women leading and active in conflict prevention and mediation efforts at sub-national and community levels and political processes at Tracks 1 and 2;

Outcome 5: Enriched political solutions at tracks 1 through the Involvement of women's social options approach

Outcome 6: Women leadership is systematically mobilized to facilitate quick impact projects and resource mobilization efforts to lead social cohesion activities at the community levels, healing, reconciliation and quick recovery projects

7. Operationalisation of FemWise-Africa: Expected Results

During the inception phase, it is envisaged that a series of good offices/missions of the members of FemWise-Africa will be undertaken in countries in crisis while teams of women will undertake preventive diplomacy engagements in vulnerable countries. Arrangements will be made to

ensure that the **private sector is involved to support FemWise-Africa's long-term and quick impact initiatives (social and economic projects) on the ground in all these countries.**

The expected results for three (3) years are as follows:

- The Secretariat of the FemWise-Africa is established and man-powered in order to coordinate the initiatives of the Network at continental level with RECs focal points;
- FemWise is fully operational with and established Steering Committee and relevant work plans adhered to;
- FemWise is indeed institutionalised, with the production and submission of quarterly briefings each year to the PSC to influence mainstreaming of women in mediation processes
- The African policy on the role of women in prevention and mediation processes is adopted by the PSC and the Assembly with clear benchmarks;
- In line with the ongoing PanWise process, 30 countries have developed relevant national legislation to operationalize FemWise-Africa at national and local levels
- Pool of 100 women annually throughout the Continent are trained in mediation and accredited to FemWise-Africa at track 1,2 and 3;
- Centres of Excellence to support FemWise-Africa are in place to work on mentorship programme for the youth, among others;
- FemWise-Africa accredited members are trained as mediators and rostered to operate at tracks 1,2 and 3 levels, and ready to be deployed;
- Knowledge Management Framework is adapted and Mediation tools (research and training materials) are developed and focused on the special conditions and unique experiences of women;
- Women mediators' experience are captured and documented (including visual stories);
- On-going conversations of progress made through annual dialogue forums with women mediators;
- Involvement of women in conflict prevention and mediation efforts addresses the needs of the members of the community (social option) which enriches political solutions at tracks 1 and 2; and
- Peace stability projects and quick impact projects are operational in vulnerable countries, leading to improved social cohesion conditions operational in all countries. Quick impact projects are seen as the foundations and Launchpad for medium and longer term initiatives that will ensure that stability and development take root.

For additional information or to submit Membership Accreditation Applications, please contact:

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