



FemWise-Africa Advanced Training on Mediation for the Great Lakes Region

Concept Note

BACKGROUND:

The Great Lakes region has made progress towards peace, security, and development. The overall peaceful transfers of power in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi, and Tanzania, among other countries, as well as the signing and implementation of peace agreements in the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan and the Sudan, illustrate the positive momentum. Many countries in the region have also made strides in strengthening bilateral cooperation, promoting good neighbourliness, and furthering regional integration. Other positive trends include dialogue and diplomatic initiatives to defuse tensions between countries, such as the quadripartite process between Rwanda and Uganda, initiated in 2019 under the aegis of Angola and the DRC, or the mediated resolution of the border dispute between the DRC and Zambia in 2020. The operationalization in May 2021 of the Contact and Coordination Group (CCG), which brings together security actors from Burundi, the DRC, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda to advance a comprehensive approach on military and non-military measures against armed groups, also suggests new opportunities to advance the peace, security and development agenda.

Despite these positive trends, pockets of instability and violence remain. The gains made so far will need to be preserved, especially in the context of the coronavirus disease. Consolidating the recent momentum observed in the region will also require sustained and coordinated support from national, regional and international actors. While it has been widely recognized that women on the continent can play a critical role in peacebuilding in the region and the continent more broadly, their role remains often under-utilized and unrecognized including in the Great Lakes region.

RATIONALE:

The African Union (AU), through a decision of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in 2017, established the Network of the African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa), as a subsidiary mechanism of the Panel of the Wise within the context of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The Network is mandated to promote and enhance the role and participation of African women in conflict prevention and mediation, including through strengthening their capacity in preventive diplomacy and mediation at tracks 1, 2 and 3. Similarly, the Advisory Board for Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in the Great Lakes



is recognized by Great Lakes Heads of State as a key body to promote the effective participation of women and girls in peacebuilding and economic development. The importance of the WPS agenda is further reflected in the “UN Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution of the Great Lakes Region” (14 Oct 2020) (“UN Strategy”), with its dedicated WPS Pillar. The co-chairs of FemWise-Africa (H.E. Dr. Specioza Wandira Kazibwe and H.E. Catherine Samba-Panza) are also senior members of the Advisory Board, thereby demonstrating the unity of purpose between the AU and the UN on gender equality and women’s empowerment.

FemWise-Africa has conducted several induction and basic mediation trainings for its members, both in-house and through collaboration with external training institutions, resulting in the transfer of relevant skills and knowledge in mediation. The goal is to enable FemWise-Africa members to be more technically equipped in their interventions and preventive efforts across their various locales. As the FemWise-Africa Network continues to grow and have a more substantial presence across the continent, under the direction of the FemWise-Africa Steering Committee, the Secretariat has undertaken the initial steps in drafting a framework to guide the envisaged decentralization process, which will subsequently see the Network operationalized at the regional and national levels. This will allow members at those levels to leverage on their proximity and intimate knowledge of conflict drivers, in order to more effectively intervene in the peculiar types of conflicts they encounter. As such, with the long-term decentralization process underway, and with positive impact and sustainability at the various levels being a key priority, it has become crucial for the Network to build the capacities of its members, beyond basic mediation trainings, to advanced training required to strategically enhance their knowledge on various components of dialogue and mediation. Additionally, conducting these advanced trainings through a Training of Trainers approach, is preferred in order to allow for a multiplicity effect where the trained members can in turn replicate similar capacity-building activities, be it at the grassroots, national or regional levels.

This training proposal reflects, sustained cooperation and collaboration between strategic partners of the Peace and Security Cooperation Framework (PSCF) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) Pact. It also supports the recommendations of the 8th Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government of the ICGLR on 20 November 2020, who acknowledged “*women for their actions in the process of consolidating peace and security in the Great Lakes Region and decided to encourage the continued commitment of the Regional Women's Forum and the Advisory Board on Women, Peace and Security to the participation of women in decision-making bodies*”.



TRAINING PROPOSAL, OBJECTIVES AND PROPOSED METHODOLOGY:

The FemWise-Africa Network, in collaboration with the Office of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region (OSESGL) proposes the initial training of 16 selected members of the Network, two (2) each from eight (8) Member States of the ICGLR, namely CAR, DRC, Burundi, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda. These countries are selected premised on the existing and emerging threats to peace, stability and security. As such, the training will facilitate the strengthening of desired skills required to empower the member's responses to these threats on the one hand, but also their engagement in high-level preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts on the other hand through their rostering. In this context, a significant outcome of the training will be the initial development of a roster of women mediators in the region to advance the objectives of PSC Framework and the ICGLR Pact as well as those of the new UN Strategy for the Great Lakes region. Future trainings will be conducted to ensure the operational readiness of women that could be rapidly deployed to lead and or support preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts.

Specifically, the training will focus generally on an in-depth understanding of conflict analysis – causes, typologies and stakeholders; general principles and steps as well as process design of dialogue and mediation. More specifically, the training will take into account the key thematic areas of mediation identified by the selected women to contribute to their capacity building. Without prejudice to the capacity needs of members, the thematic areas could include power-sharing negotiations, security arrangements and or negotiations with armed groups, which is a recurrent issue in some of the aforementioned countries. Notably, armed groups continue to play a pivotal role in modern conflicts, negatively impacting human security. But in many cases, their aims and interests are often misunderstood, which leads to flawed approaches by peace actors and stakeholders in interacting and engaging them towards the peaceful resolution of the related/resultant conflicts. Therefore, a focus on understanding their interests and needs through an in-depth and practical dive into the modus operandi and demands of such groups, including the cross-cutting social and structural factors that often proceed their formation, is also proposed in order to enhance FemWise-Africa members' early warning capacities in identifying potential contexts for early intervention.

Further, the training will also accommodate experience sharing on lessons learnt, challenges and best practices of women's engagement in mediation processes. In order to enhance practical understanding, two highly experienced women mediators who have previously engaged and intervened in conflict situations will share their experiences. Specifically, it is proposed that one of these experienced mediators be from the FemWise-Africa Network (in order to allow members



to infuse rich lessons and experiences from their peer in the Networks); while the other experienced mediator will be drawn from the Nordic Women Mediators Network to foster global experiential learning. To this end, from the FemWise-Africa side, **Madam Betty Bigombe** from Uganda - an ICGLR Member State - who has extensive experience engaging, intervening and mediating with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Northern Uganda, is proposed, while the FemWise-Africa Secretariat will engage with the Nordic Women Mediator Network to virtually attend the training and share their experience.

OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the training is to enhance the skills of FemWise-Africa members in the selected countries of the Great Lakes Region on mediation to facilitate their contribution to preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts.

The specific objectives are:

- Facilitate common understanding on conflict analysis of the drivers, typologies and stakeholders involved in conflicts especially within the region;
- Facilitate the identification, anticipation and development of response strategies to emerging or existing peace and security threats;
- Facilitate experience sharing on challenges, best practices and lessons learnt from women's engagement in dialogue and mediation efforts;
- Improve skills and capacities required for early response interventions especially through dialogue and mediation efforts;
- Develop a roster of women mediators for the Great Lakes region to facilitate rapid intervention in conflict situations at the national and regional levels.

PARTICIPANTS:

The training participants will be drawn from eight (8) Member States of the Great Lakes region, namely the CAR, Uganda, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, DRC, Burundi and Tanzania. Additionally, the training will also bring together two resource persons and two trainers preferably one Anglophone and one Francophone; two experienced mediators for experience sharing; and representatives of the OSESG-GL, Secretariat of the Panel of the Wise/FemWise-Africa, the ICGLR Secretariat and Fora, as well as UN WOMEN and UNDP.



METHODOLOGY:

The training will be designed based on participatory learning approaches, with an emphasis on interactive discussion, role playing and simulation of trainings. The aim is to strengthen the capability of participants to first glean more in-depth knowledge on the subject matter; and then subsequently prepare their sessions; identify the best tools and materials on these topics in order to deliver trainings in their respective communities; but most importantly, utilize the skills garnered for effective mediation processes. As part of the active learning approach, participants will be tasked to prepare and simulate brief training sessions on the final day.

The training will also include a pre- and post-training evaluation to assess participants' baseline and post-training knowledge.

DATE & PLACE: The training will be conducted **on 06 to 10 September 2021 in Kigali, Rwanda**