



Mediation operation
and Influence 1325
insights

VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES ON INFLUENCING PEACE PROCESSES





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Operation 1325 wishes to support women insider mediators in their peace and conflict processes. We have collected views and insights on mediation processes in this small publication, for inspiration and for encouragement. It is a contribution towards more women peace-makers. Our project the Mediation Lab brought together women to share their experience of mediation and negotiation. Six countries participated in the international conference and training. Different contexts were explored and both challenges and successes were provided for mutual learning of mediation skills. Then a series of multiplier activities in six countries were carried out to train others in insider mediation and peace-making. Several lobby meetings have been held within the Mediation Lab in order to raise awareness with European policy makers. The project was supported by MUCF.



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MEDIATION IN CONFLICT

The role of the mediator is changing. Their core responsibility is to engage in, and support, the conflict process. However, mediators sometimes provide ideas, suggestions, or even formal proposals to resolve conflict. One such example is Mary Robinson - the first woman lead mediator in a peace process, appointed by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon to the Great Lakes region. She exceeded expectations by insisting on the inclusion of women and NGOs in the negotiations, saying “As men take up arms, women hold communities together in times of war,”¹.

According to Judith van den Boogert, from the Clingendael Institute, a mediator doesn't create the agenda. Other sources, however, mention that mediators do help define agendas, as well as identify and reexamine the conflict issues. Mediators also help parties communicate more effectively, find areas of common ground and, hopefully, reach an agreement.

DEFINING AN INSIDER MEDIATOR

An insider mediator is both affected by, and lives within, the conflict framework. Hence the term “insider”. They are from the region in which the conflict occurs, and will have to live with the consequences of the agreement. Their credibility is essential. All parties involved in the conflict need to respect and trust the insider mediator to be, if not neutral, then fair. Their high profile is considered key to the success of the mediation process.

PARTIALITY, PREJUDICE OR LEANING TOWARD

The concept of partiality is essential in the discussion on the relevance of insider mediators. Partiality takes various forms:

- **RELATIONAL PARTIALITY** is where the mediator has a closer relationship with one party - based on personal, political or economic ties - than with the other.
- **PROCESS PARTIALITY** is where the mediator guides the process in way that is partial to one side, such as giving that side more time to talk.
- **OUTCOME PARTIALITY** is where the mediator leverages a biased agreement.

Insider mediators are inclined towards relational partiality, but should avoid both process and outcome partiality at all costs. They are compelled to be as objective as possible by separating the person from the behaviour, and remaining detached from judgement, despite bias.

THE NEUTRAL AND IMPARTIAL DEBATE

Usually, mediators from international institutions – such as the UN and EU – who are not involved in the conflict - are called to mediate. Their role may be to coordinate mediation team efforts with those players already involved. They are regarded as “neutral” and impartial because they are external. This view, however, is not universal and there are groups in conflict, and members of the international community, who see things differently.

In the Libyan Crisis, for example, the role of UN mediators during peace talks was seen as controversial, and did not go unchallenged. At the Mediation Lab several women peace builders criticised mediators’ part in the process. They suggested that mediators entered negotiations with an agenda, and were thus not neutral.

Mediators can indeed influence the peace process when they take on issues not usually dealt with by mediators. In Libya UN mediators were perceived as representing a Western capitalist alliance. The Libyans felt unheard and the hope of an inclusive peace was then futile. In Iraq, women expressed their mistrust when mediators intervened in the process. They felt there was insufficient understanding, for example, when the mediator became involved in domestic issues. Women from Palestine raised their voices about how the UN intervenes. Their mistrust is such that neither the UN, nor other international organisations, are seen as neutral or impartial.

The idea that an external mediator is neutral and impartial is not shared by all. Likewise, the idea that neutrality and impartiality exist at all is debated in regions in conflict. Any outside intervention needs to be considered within the wider geopolitical arena. One has to question the legitimacy, morality and motivations of the western perspective and how it hinders, or fosters, a process.

FIGURE 1

POTENTIAL FOR COLLABORATION AMONG INSIDERS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION

International organisation supporting insider-led processes

Creating space for peer-exchange and joint-learning

Mobilizing political support

Providing organizational and logistical support

Providing process-design support

Capacity development based on needs

Coaching

Mentoring

Offering 'shadowing' opportunities

Insiders supporting international organisation-led processes

Relaying early warning signals

Offering mediation support services

Accompanying

Co-mediating

Offering feedback and contextual advice

Acting as sounding board

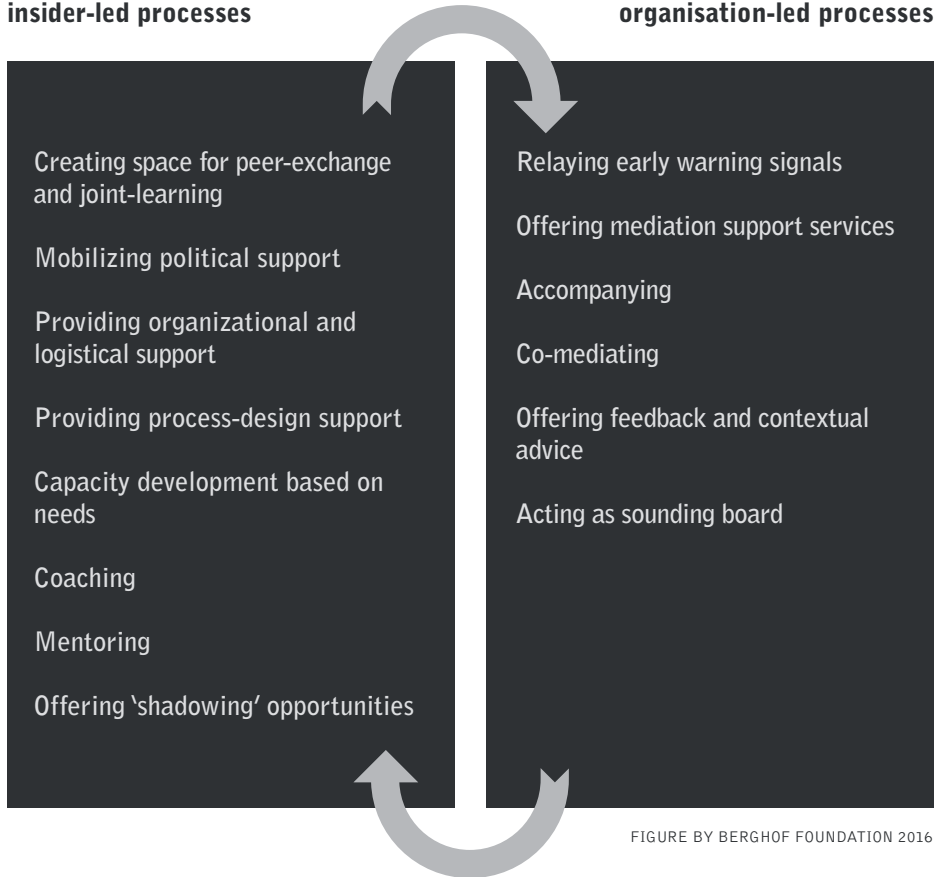


FIGURE BY BERGHOF FOUNDATION 2016

ISSUES TO CONSIDER DURING MEDIATION

To foster acceptance by groups in conflict, foreign support needs to consider the following issues:

- The importance of a thorough analysis of the context specific conflict cycle, and a mapping of the stakeholders involved.
- The importance of a thorough measure of the reach and influence of women's civil society movement.
- The varying political and social identities of women: women are not a homogenous group, and they have different views when faced with conflict. Working towards an inclusive peace means incorporating a wide diversity of perspectives.
- Women who want to be included in mediation, and the peace and conflict process, ask for more training even when they have experience. The EEAS also recommends security core training; DDR and SSR.
- There is a recognisable synergy between the political inclusion of women (seats in parliament), and the role women then play in the peace process of that society.
- Do no harm – this principle governs any outsider involvement. Because external support can significantly impact power relations in a society it is important to include this principal in any analysis and plan of action.

MEASURES FOR CSOs TO SUPPORT GROUPS IN CONFLICT

Civil society actors from other settings can consider providing measures such as relevant training and initial resource assistance. Measures can include preparing resources and facilities for insider mediators. Every measure must be context-sepcific.

The Mediation Lab has identified these general measures:

- Supporting the work of women coalitions and their space in the respective local civil society.
- Supporting general involvement, which may be about political representation, and media presence.
- Training and competency strengthening.
- Acting as a 'door opener', and a point of contact into the diplomacy scene.
- Working within the existing mediation framework to support the entry of insider mediators.

The Mediation Lab focused on training and competency strengthening measures. It provided a platform for learning from others' experiences, in varying contexts. An inter-contextual meeting provides the space to encounter one's own path and to analyse it in its own setting. Learning about others facilitates learning about oneself, assisting the development of one's own path.

The Mediation Lab also worked at increasing points of contact with relevant door openers, such as established diplomats, international mediators and those already involved in peace resolutions. These door openers are of great benefit to women insider mediators.

HOW CSOs FACILITATE INSTEAD OF COMPLICATING THE PROCESS

At this stage we need to address the criticism leveled at insider mediation and civil society actors in peace resolution. Critics argue that the participation of civil society makes it more difficult to reach a peace agreement. Because: the increase in the number of actors takes more time, inclusion adds to the number of opinions and ideas to consider, power hierarchies may be questioned, and preconceived concepts, contested.

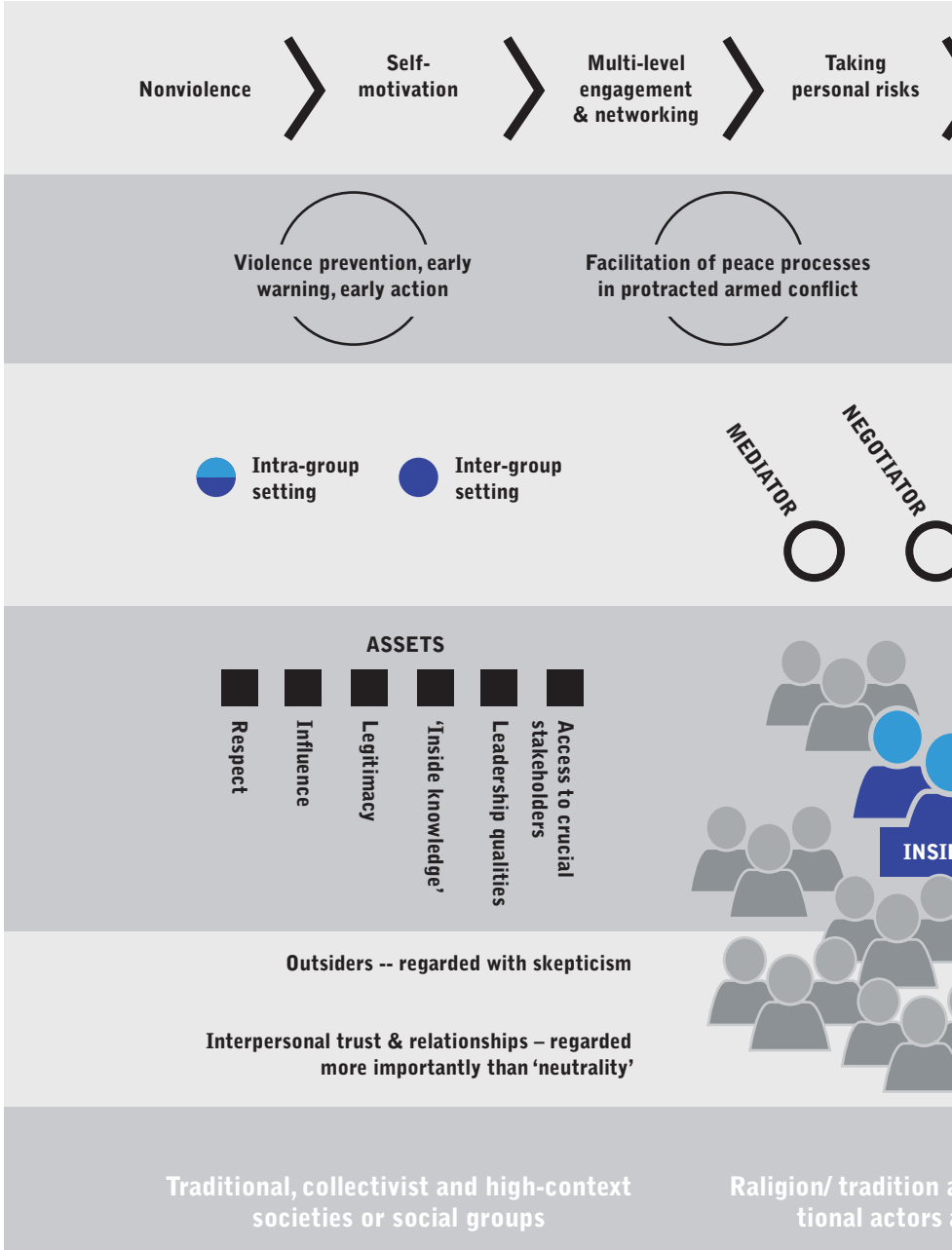
However, some researchers and studies argue that involving women does not burden the process; an inclusive process promotes the likelihood of reaching, implementing, and sustaining an agreement. Yet, it is crucial to focus on the main concern of women leaders and insider mediators: the goal of peace. Goals may seem conflicting. The goal of peace may conflict with the goal of inclusion. Any difficulty in the process towards reaching an agreement should be considered an obstacle to be overcome. When the goal of peace is paramount, other goals are merely a means to this end. Civil society participation facilitates the peace goal, and strengthens a sustainable and inclusive peaceful outcome.

APPROPRIATE SUPPORT DURING CONFLICT

An inclusive analysis of context and conflict is vital before providing support for a peace process. It increases the likelihood of measures having the desired effect, and decreases the risk of adding to the conflict.

THE FACETS OF INSIDER MEDIATION

INSIDER MEDIATION



ON WITHIN A SUPPORT NETWORK

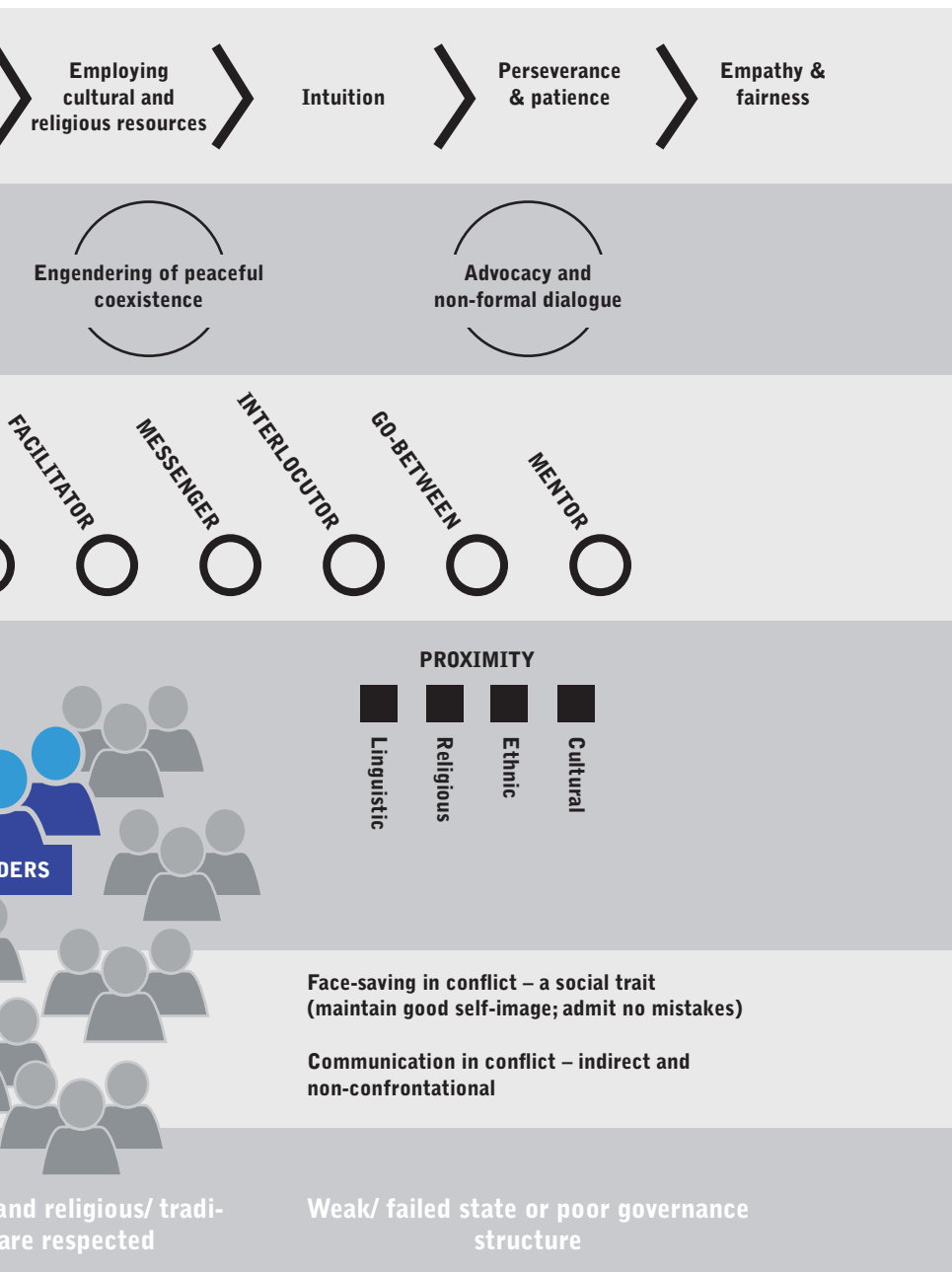


FIGURE BY BERGHOF FOUNDATION 2016

APPROACHES

FUNCTIONS

ROLES

INSIDERNESS

PREMISE

CONTEXT

The UNDP provides a checklist of situations where processes may benefit from external support:

- A** When there is limited political will.
- B** Limited capacity within.
- C** Lack of trusted forums, or intermediaries, for example in highly polarised societies where credible individuals, or platforms, may not exist for the mediation of disputes.
- D** Lack of safe spaces when a process has already begun.
- E** Lack of critical mass or momentum: when insiders don't have access to, or impact on, the exercise of political power.

HOW TO IDENTIFY WOMEN INSIDER MEDIATORS IN CIVIL SOCIETY

The best authority for identifying potential insider mediators are credible national actors. Let the process take time. Candidates are recruited amongst UN Resident Coordinators, the Heads of EU Delegations, and other multilateral delegations. The same process used to determine bilateral partners also works well when identifying credible insider mediators.

The Mediation Lab identified women based on input from reference groups, people in their country, major players in civil society working on the agenda of 1325, Swedish embassy focal point and UN Women. The process aimed at both inclusivity and the strategic choice of individuals who had the potential to influence and lead future processes. Mediation Lab reference groups were also chosen on recommendations. In one case the recommendation came from a network of women with whom we had worked on peacebuilding initiatives.

To maximise legitimacy and diversity Mediation Lab had input from various stakeholders, levels of authority, and different contexts. For example: the women from the MENA-region were identified by UNMILS, the UN Women and Swedish Kvinna till kvinna Foundation, a pivotal player in the civil society 1325 sector. The 1325 agenda is such a central focus for those involved in mediation that it has the potential of functioning as a hub for women mediators.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS IN IDENTIFICATION WORK, AND WORKING WITHIN CIVIL SOCIETY AS A WHOLE

Informal influence of particular groups - too often Western perspectives on power, which centre on decision-making within formal political structures, omit influential groups, individuals and controversial politicised groups who operate in different spheres, or within other areas of influence, even though they are influential.

Handling conservative views and gender power dynamics – one needs to be aware that traditional institutions and resources in peacebuilding do not necessarily have the same experience and skill in gender analysis as the women's movement representatives who are candidates for mediation work. Nevertheless, they are often involved in the peace process. An understanding of how to handle traditional, conservative views and gender power dynamics is necessary.

PROBLEMS IN THE PEACE PROCESS

It is not uncommon for mediators to find themselves a target, or in danger, because of alleged contact with an armed and illegal group in the conflict. This was the case with Padma Ratna Tuladhar in Nepal, and Piedad Cordoba in Colombia. Such a contact may take the form of an alliance, membership, or even a singular, or sporadic, exchange of views. The risk of a mediator's legitimacy is unpredictable as policies and practices may change rapidly.

Another risk to the mediator's influence is his/her overt opinions on the conflict, or the government. A mediator's criticism, for example, of human rights' violations by government may be viewed as partiality. The mediator becomes incompatible with the stereotype of the impartial mediator.

External actors can experience difficulties and threats during periods of repression against peace agents, like a suspended process or a dangerous situation. External actors have a vested interest in remaining in the country and complying with duties, even if the current ruler deems otherwise. It is possible they will lose their advantage. It is a risk to lose the trust of the host and the advantages of an invitation to work and act in the country. Therefore, a strategic balance between the duty to respect the host country, and behaviour which complies with international laws and agreements, is necessary.

For instance sovereignty as a principal is a key in international relations and in mediation. However, it has openly been considered an impediment to the Swedish task of introducing more of Women, Peace and Security at the United Nations Security Council. The Swedish diplomatic team works at balancing the principle of sovereignty with the values of human rights, equality and democracy. To work towards inclusion it is crucial to maintain open diplomatic conversation. Diplomacy is instrumental when overcoming hindrances to peace because it respects sovereignty as instrumental to a successful mediation process. When OHCHR compromised its mandate in Colombia, a fine balance of principles and values allowed its stay in the country.

CONTACT ‘DOOR OPENING’: A SWEDISH EXPERIENCE

Door opening is a major criterion when developing an accompanying cadre of international and national players to support insiders during mediation. The accompanying pool of attendant staff is still small, particularly in Francophone and Arab contexts. Language during the mediation process can be an impediment. Thus, this assistant community of diplomats, experts and practitioners needs encouragement and further development.

An under-addressed element of this challenge is the mentoring of national staff to sustain interventions. An example of this is the Swedish government agency, Folke Bernadotte Academy, in charge of coordinating a network of high level profile women (Swedish Women Mediation Network) to serve in the international mediation scene of track 1 diplomacy. Its women are drawn from positions of diplomacy with experience from various backgrounds, willing to support women's inclusion in local movements.

Birgitta Holst Alani, a recent advisor to the UN's Special Envoy to Syria, was a valuable resource in the Mediation Lab. She spoke openly to the women, as one colleague to another, offering to contribute to their learning, practice and participation. The conversation dealt with topics such as how the Syrian mediation process unfolded, how mediators should or should not influence, who selects mediators, what institutions invite whom, and how the women at the Syrian Women Advisory Board were selected. The discussion was further enriched by the practical knowledge of one of the Clingendael Institute Mediator experts, who also advised the women in the Syrian process.

TRAINING

Training can better meet the needs of women taking part in initiatives for inclusive peace by accurately assessing their knowledge and experience. Training should target lack of knowledge, and needs to refresh and/or confirm.

It may contain topics like mediation processes, outside involvement, state institution and constitutions, what goes on behind the scenes, etc. Incorporating practice sessions that go beyond role play, in workshops, will add to insider mediators' learning journeys. The forms such practical sessions take depend on the context and the capabilities of the insider mediator, and should be discussed before training starts. This will increase the training's efficiency and develop the mediation process.

INFLUENCE RATHER THAN SEATS AT THE TABLE; CHANGING THE TABLE

Emerging from the work of some women mediation groups is the idea of changing the scene completely, specifically when it comes to the negotiation table, or the physical setting of a mediation. Often the table is a metaphor and women's demands for participation phrased as a 'seat' at the table. However, the number of seats are clearly not the only factor for gaining power.

Action from the parties, facilitators and mediators who already have a seat is important to change women's influence.

To increase influence it's not enough to get a seat. It may require changes in the setup at the table. For instance, a gender-coaching programme for the lead mediator, training in gender-sensitivity, or even an agreement on the use of gendered language etc. In other words, women's influence must be encouraged by all stakeholders at all stages of the process.

What is obvious, when discussing change, is the want of practical field studies and research in the mediation process itself. This is stated both by researchers at Uppsala University Peace and Conflict Department, such as Isak Svensson and Angela Muvembe Sellström, and by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Conflict Unit, etc. Thorough research is welcomed by all actors involved in this issue.

HEADS UP AND ADVICE

Despite the differences in each case of working for peace, there are some common issues to bear in mind when including women in the work of peace:

- **WHAT:** it is important to choose which issues to prioritise. This is achieved by treating each conflict cycle independently, and taking into account the experience of women's movements.
- **WHEN:** there are conflict situations when merely introducing women so that their presence is felt is a catalyst for the inclusion of women. In this instance they have no active role, they're merely in the room but have no power. There are other cases when the women's movement should be involved in the negotiations. And there are yet further cases where women's involvement may be perceived as ill-timed for the negotiations. When to involve women is thus important.
- **WHICH:** the question is often which women's group to bring in; how many individuals; or how many organisations, regions etc. to represent. Learning from others' experience may also determine which actors to bring in, to receive aid/mediation from.
- **PEACE SHOULD BE FUNDAMENTAL.** Peace must be the first and utmost goal and all inclusion must align to this goal. Anything burdening the negotiation process needs identifying and solving. All inclusion must be well timed.

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operation 1325

Operation 1325 is a Swedish civil society organization working for the implementation of UN's Resolution 1325. Founded by several Swedish women's and peace organizations in 2003, the organizations objective is to increase women's influence at all levels of peace processes and in conflict resolution. The UN Security Council adopted the groundbreaking Resolution 1325, about Women, Peace and Security, in 2000. The resolution's aim is to reaffirm the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace building. Operation 1325 advocates, informs, educates and creates platforms for debate and dialogue to influence decision makers, civil society and the general public with the aim of implementing Resolution 1325. Since it's founding, Operation 1325 has carried out capacity-building projects with partner organizations in the Balkans, Latin America, Central Africa, Middle East and North Africa.

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