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**WOMEN'S ROLES IN
INDIGENOUS APPROACHES
TO MEDIATION AND
CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

On 31 October 2000, the **UN Security Council passed the landmark resolution 1325**, sponsored by Namibia. UNSCR 1325 represents a victory for women and a global **recognition** of their legitimate **right to protection and participation in peace processes** at all levels. It is also an acknowledgement of the world's responsibility to prevent gender based violence. Twenty years later, this special edition of the **Femwise-Africa** Newsletter is part of the African Union's contribution to the commemoration of 1325's 20th Anniversary, and the ongoing discussion around **the future of the Women Peace and Security agenda**. Focusing on women's roles in indigenous conflict resolution in Africa, the Network is using this Newsletter as a tool to **look back and leverage** our experiences and heritage as we look ahead.

In this edition we look at members' **perspectives** and **experiences** of traditional conflict resolution approaches and mechanisms. Through different **case studies** from the **five Africa regions**, we delve into some of the challenges and opportunities that these **processes, structures** and **mechanisms** present for women peace-builders and mediators.

As the **anchor document** for our engagements in the first Annual meeting of the Global Alliance of Women Mediator Networks, this second edition of the FemWise-Africa Newsletter is intended to be **informative, inspirational and provocative**. We hope that it will trigger some out-of-the-box innovative thinking and inspire new collaborations and partnerships that will advance the WPS agenda further and faster.

Enjoy the read!

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WOMEN **AND** INDIGENOUS APPROACHES **TO** MEDIATION IN AFRICA

By Mukondeleli Mpeiwa

For decades, a considerable volume has been written and said about mediation as a viable, positive conflict resolution tool that is applicable to almost any context regardless of the complexity of the conflict issues, actors or processes. Over time, with the emergence of many multilateral and academic actors on the mediation stage, the discussion and focus (including of resources), among others, seems to have converged on what is commonly referred to as the need to “professionalize” the field. This discourse has of course included the professionalization of women mediators, which in some contexts has morphed into a precondition for their participation in peace processes. Conversely, the “lack” of qualified, experienced women is also often presented as yet another justification for their continued marginalization and exclusion, especially in the more formal Track I and Track II processes.

While many scholars, diplomats and practitioners have written on mediation practice, including its professionalization in terms of the lack thereof, necessity and relevant approaches, fewer have interrogated the meaning of this “professionalization”, and even fewer have engaged the concept from an African perspective. In discussions around mediation practice, and in many mediation trainings, the phrase “mediation is an art and a science” is commonly used, including by established mediation scholars. While the validity of this statement on its own is debatable, a perhaps more pertinent question to ask revolves around the epistemological connotations of such a statement. Which science is mediation, and more importantly, whose science?

To varying degrees, the COVID-19 context has in some ways relocated mediation practice and reorganized the relevance or importance of its actors, with local mediators and their efforts now at the forefront, and receiving more recognition and support. This makes the discussion of indigenous approaches to mediation a necessary and timely one. Additionally, with 2020 being the commemorative year of the 20th anniversary of the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, despite the unprecedented challenges posed by the novel Coronavirus, the world's attention seems to have momentarily returned to the Women Peace and Security Agenda. This gives women mediators, including African women, a unique, timely opportunity to instigate and make the case for more inclusive approaches to mediation, including its conceptualization and practice, so that professionalization is not synonymous with delegitimization and more barriers to participation.

Theoretical Perspectives

Any interrogation of indigenous conflict resolution approaches in Africa should be premised on an understanding of the nature of conflicts in African societies, dating back to the precolonial era, tracing to the present. Such an enquiry should not only assess Africa's historical conflict resolution methods and approaches, but do so based on a sound appreciation of the evolution of the conflict actors, causes, drivers and processes.

Although the word indigenous has several contextual meanings. Here it refers to the practices and beliefs of "traditional, customary, pre-colonial Africa as opposed to models which were imported by virtue of colonial legal heritage".

The evolution of conflict in Africa

From the precolonial period, African history was notably peppered with tributes to brave, "larger than life" warriors and leaders, including women, and accounts of great battles and conquests. Similar to all human societies, conflict has historically been present in indigenous African communities, with disagreements stemming from a range of issues including indebtedness, marital misunderstandings or differences, as well as physical harm and damage to property. Contestations over succession, inheritance, land boundaries and natural resources, including grazing land, sometimes led to violent clashes, especially among different communities and ethnic groups, resulting in damage to infrastructure, forced displacement and loss of life.

From the 1960s, the main preoccupation across the Continent was the independence struggle, with fairly clear, common "external enemies" that needed to be overthrown. The post-independence phase, while bringing many opportunities for the average African has also brought its fair share of challenges, which continue to

to evolve, intersect and increase, including in their complexity and interrelatedness. Today's challenges range from inequality; poverty and overall inadequate and unequal economic opportunities; terrorism and violent extremism; constitutionalism and governance issues, to growing criminality.

Across the continent crime, both national and transnational, has become a real threat to public security. This includes gender-based violence which manifests in every single African country, albeit to varying degrees, and in various forms. Unfortunately, transforming gender relations has remained a constant challenge even as the continent continues to evolve socio-economically and politically. Africa's contemporary conflict context has undoubtedly been worsened by the increase in foreign interference and involvement in its affairs, which continues to drive and deepen differences amongst various groups, usually by exacerbating existing, legitimate social grievances, and politicizing them.

Indigenous African conflict resolution approaches

Africa's indigenous conflict resolution approaches are heterogeneous and vary across different contexts and cultures. Invariably, they have historically aimed to not only resolve disputes and settle disagreements, but also prioritized social harmony as well as the restoration and maintenance of friendship and positive relationships amongst conflict parties. Traditionally, the main conflict resolution methods of African communities generally included variants of mediation; adjudication; and diplomacy, among others. These approaches were of course practiced and applied contextually in different countries and communities, depending on mainly social and cultural factors.

In most cases traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and processes were entrenched through custom, and with formal recognition and legal codification in some post-independence societies. Mediation is considered the most popular conflict resolution tool in traditional Africa, preferred because it is viewed as less time-consuming, less expensive and with the most sustainable, constructive outcomes. Mediation also avoids winner-loser or zero-sum outcomes, and focuses more on relationship transformation, making post-settlement conciliation more feasible. Scholars note that historically, male elders played a leading role in conflict resolution in most African societies, including that of mediators.

Conventionally this was attributed to their rich experiences and “social standing”. The Somali gurtii system of Clan Elders is an example of indigenous African mediation mechanisms that rely on male elders to make peace among warring factions. Traditional African societies also used diplomacy to avoid wars and escalation of conflict with neighboring ethnic groups. Central to these diplomatic efforts were clan elders, including chiefs and other emissaries.

Carried through from centuries of practice, and entrenched in custom and tradition with variations between cultures and communities, many indigenous conflict resolution methods in Africa were loosely based on mediation, and exclusively relied on local actors, including traditional leaders and elders. This continues to be the case, however many countries have established “traditional community-based quasi-judicial and legal decision-making routines to manage and resolve conflicts within or between communities.”

These systems aim to resolve conflicts without resorting to the formal legal system and courts, or the police, and often result in informal but concrete agreements and reconciliation, which help to restore and sustain broader inter-communal relations and social harmony. Traditional conflict resolution approaches cater for varying levels of literacy, making them considerably more inclusive and accessible than the more formal structures.

Community members are also usually part of the process, either as observers, advisers or process facilitators, and are therefore closely involved in the resolution of conflicts that may affect them, thus contributing to social trust. This differs from the external-actor-driven approaches, including multilateral mediation, that have come to characterize formal conflict-resolution in Africa today.

Although impartiality is central to African mediation, due to the close-knit often familial ties among the various actors, the disputing parties are usually well-supported and engaged. This encourages acknowledgement of responsibility and wrongdoing, and fosters social justice and real reconciliation in the long-term interest of the broader community. In addition to being participatory and inclusive, other benefits of Africa’s indigenous approaches to conflict resolution include: accessibility, ownership, transparency, affordability reconciliation, sustainability (of both process and outcomes), direct accountability, replicability and the durability of structures and processes that are shared and practiced across different generations.

The Role of African Women in Indigenous Conflict Resolution

In recent times, as the struggle for gender-equality has matured and gained global acceptance, a major criticism of African indigenous conflict resolution systems is the relatively limited role played by women, which often relates to responsibilities around the general welfare of participants. This is of course a very broad generalization that should not be misconstrued to suggest that all African communities and societies do not substantively engage women in their conflict resolution efforts. There are numerous examples of women's recognized substantive roles in traditional conflict resolution processes.

Women contribute to indigenous conflict resolution in various capacities, including as chiefs, and as the Khadzi (chief's sister) and Vhakoma (chief's senior advisor) who are central to resolving conflict in South Africa's Tshivenda culture.

Other examples include the role of Rakgadi amongst the Barolong in Tswana culture, women advisors in Alefa district in Ethiopia, the Nneka concept in traditional Igbo society in Nigeria, and Luo women peacemakers in Kenya. Despite more recent accounts of women's contributions to contemporary conflict resolution efforts in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and South Africa, the role of women in traditional mechanisms remains unacceptably minimal across the continent, and requires urgent transformation and expansion.

Compared to conflict resolution, African women have been and continue to be more actively engaged in indigenous conflict prevention, making use of various platforms and methods, largely based on individual efforts and continuation of family or community traditions.

Typically, mainly older women have continued to sustain the tradition of oral peace education through story-telling, idioms and historical recollection, all often passed on from previous generations. They also train young women and girls in various traditional educational processes and ceremonies, as well as the arts, including poetry and dances, through which they share knowledge and teach practices and conduct that promote social cohesion and co-existence. As future custodians of this heritage, young women are groomed through these processes.

Indigenous conflict resolution actions in Africa are often underpinned by the philosophies of Ubuntu and its core principles of reciprocity, inclusivity and conviction of a shared destiny. Ubuntu, (I am because we are) is widely practiced among indigenous communities in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa; Kparakpor (humanhood) and omoluwabi (code of good conduct) of West Africa's Yoruba people; ujamaa in Kiswahili; kanye ndu bowi among Buem people in Ghana and Togo; and the gacaca process in Rwanda. However, despite being practiced widely, as with most indigenous knowledge, indigenous conflict resolution methods, efforts and successes remain mainly oral, and undocumented.

Key Observations and Recommendations

Thus far, this discussion paper has presented an overview of indigenous conflict resolution approaches in Africa, and highlighted the roles played by women therein. It has shown mediation to be a core ingredient in promoting peace, preventing escalation and resolving conflicts in and among African communities. Central to this is collective ownership and participation as traditional mediation is undertaken by local actors, representing established and recognized local governance structures. Of concern is the generally low substantive role played by women in these often male-dominated structures, which necessitates some review and reform going forward.

Given the many positives highlighted above, African approaches should play a more significant role in conflict resolution, both on the continent and beyond. To foster this, training programmes based on African cultural values should be promoted and disseminated among policy-makers and practitioners, including at the local level, inculcating a broad-based culture of peace that is based on familiar principles, structures and processes. Traditional and local leaders are key to this process, both as custodians of knowledge and cultural institutions, and also as social conveners and process legitimizers. Additionally, policies should be reviewed and where necessary, revised in a manner that recognizes and legitimizes indigenous structures, institutions, as well as their knowledge and approaches.

Although there have been some efforts to document African indigenous knowledge, and promote its broader acceptance, recognition and protection globally, more investment in this area is needed, both monetarily and in terms of capacity. Furthermore, producers of African knowledge should also be duly recognized, supported and protected.

Epistemology is critical to this process, and efforts should thus be made to not only integrate African knowledge into contemporary global conflict resolution practice, but also credit and acknowledge these contributions as African. Given the opportunities of the aforementioned current global focus on WPS these interventions should be made from a deliberately gendered perspective that specifically focuses on promoting and enhancing the roles of women in indigenous approaches to mediation and conflict resolution.

Conclusion

Although not conclusive, this discussion paper sought to instigate discussion and illicit some concrete suggestions and recommendations on how a new understanding of indigenous conflict resolution approaches could help to address existing conflicts, and prevent the outbreak of future violence. Among others, the paper recommends integration and recognition of indigenous methods in the more mainstream ‘international’ models, in order to create more effective, sustainable home-grown approaches to conflict resolution in Africa. In addition to possibly more effectiveness and sustainability, such an approach would be in line with the African Union’s repeated calls for ‘African solutions to Africa’s problems’

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ALGERIA.

ALGERIAN WOMEN FACING TERRORISM: RESISTANCE, RESILIENCE, RECONSTRUCTION

By Professor Fatima Z. Karadja

My talk refers to what has been called the black decade or the red decade, I don't know at what level of the chromatic scale to place it; what is certain is that it has the color of horror for all of Algeria.

In the 1990s, my country suffered, in almost total isolation, an unprecedented aggression aimed at the destruction of the Republican State and the submission of society to a deadly ideology by the most abject methods including those who break the most basic rules of humanity.

It began with targeted attacks, aimed at the security forces, then women who did not adopt the stereotypes imposed on them, then intellectuals to drain the country of its cognitive potential.

The violence escalated reaching its climax with indiscriminate and massive massacres. It was at a time when the international community refused to take note of the devastating, radical and extensive nature of terrorism.

That was more than twenty years ago. Terrorism has since changed its face, processes and tools, but its matrix and its objectives remain the same. It is a scourge that targets humanity and civilization.

In the Algerian context of the 1990s, women were both privileged targets and essential protagonists.

After having suffered the most infamous exactions, because they were considered as spoils of war, they were given over to gang rape, sexual slavery, mutilation, and murder; With nothing more to lose, they rose up to stand against terrorism.

Bringers of life, nurturing by nature and by culture, they instinctively invest in the protection and survival of their loved ones; they seek by all means the resources to confront crises.

Thus, their action has inscribed itself as much into the political axis, as the psychological and social axis; we could summarize it under the label: **Resistance, Résilience, Reconstruction.**

Of course, this is not to deny or minimize the role of the security forces and the population at large, who have also paid a heavy price. It is only a question of highlighting the specific aspect of the involvement of women and its impact on society.

The Resistance

This was expressed, first by heroic behavior on a daily basis. Those who were working continued to exercise their profession despite threats and prohibitions.

One example was the news bulletins on TV that were presented exclusively by women. Another example was the teachers who continued to impart knowledge. Our memories will be forever marked by the nine young women of Relizane, sacrificed on the altar of barbarism and obscurantism.

On a second level, the resistance meant the involvement of women, associative executives, academics, etc., in the shaping of a counter-narrative. While a campaign of disinformation, cleverly orchestrated by the terrorists and their sponsors, sowed confusion and doubt on the identity of the assassins, the women set out to re-establish the truth about the experience of Algerians. They sought to dismantle the abject "who killed whom?" and deprive terrorists of the legitimacy and bond afforded them by certain forums outside.

In a further form of resistance, women have even engaged in self-defense: For example, we always remember the image of Yemma Zohra: A survivor of the national liberation war, this sexagenarian witnessed the beheading of her only son. Under the impact of the pain, she went into a dissociative delirium as she tried to breathe new life into him by placing the deceased's head back on his trunk.

With the support of her neighbors, she came out of her psychotic episode and resumed her life; in reaction she sublimated her suffering by taking part in the self-defense program under the control of the legal security forces. This is a great example of resistance and resilience.

The Resilience

My testimony is based on my experience as a citizen, woman and professional. Faced with the scale of the massacres, we set up a multidisciplinary unit (psychologists, doctors, social actors), intervening with survivors of collective massacres. The approach, flexible and adaptive, combined empathy and technicality; by sharing common values, by recognizing their status as victims, by showing compassion and respect, we succeeded in creating an extensive environment of trust.

The situation back then was a scene of chaos marked by paralysis and collapse, much like a "freeze frame". Our action was to set in motion again the continuum of life by debriefing to restore speech and expression and reinstate the chronology of reality.

Life and death were side by side in the same borderless space; however, if there is a taboo

that all of humanity shares, it is that of death; for this, humans use various culture-dependent procedures: burial, cremation, immersion, in order to establish the symbolism of the separation of the two worlds. In this context, it is necessary to identify the people within a community that can restore the connection: Prayer for the dead, funeral rituals, the individualization of graves, the Fatiha prayer dedicated to each soul, the revival of traditions, they all contribute to the initiation of the mourning process.

The Reconstruction

The collective action consisted of restoring the functioning of institutional spaces with the few means that still remained: administrative offices, health centers, schools.

There is the example of the teacher who assembled a picture with the faces of all the murdered children and put it up at the entrance of the school. She then summoned all the students, inviting them to meditate in front of the photo, then to return to the courtyard to raise the flag and sing the national anthem and then resume the class. This act, trivial at first sight, is full of

"We took care of the orphans, and we took care of those that were the weakest. All the customs that would enable us to revitalize the sharing and solidarity within the community were reactivated. Life began to gain meaning and healing began."

meaning: we do not deny reality, the pain is present, but the event has passed, and life can resume through a dynamic that takes its cue from elements that unite the community.

We took care of the orphans, and we took care of those that were the weakest. All the customs that would enable us to revitalize the sharing and solidarity within the community were reactivated. Life began to gain meaning and healing began. Crises generate new situations and adaptation is needed to provide innovative responses.

Women, until then confined to the domestic space, have become emancipated by force of circumstances, and they have expressed new aspirations. They have organized themselves with support and solidarity groups; it was them who identified the need to take care of the orphans and widows of terrorists, in respect of their fundamental rights as citizens. This was done, first of all, to avoid entrapping them in the murderous identity they inherited and then also to indicate their belonging to the community.

It is here that lie the markings that still reverberate in the National Reconciliation effort.

CAMEROON.

INDIGENOUS PEACEMAKING OR PEACEBUILDING APPROACHES CASE STUDY: ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON AMBAZONIA CRISIS

BY MELANIE TEMBE

Africans are a heterogeneous society with diverse cultures that have evolved over years. Yet certain features of our cultures such as local conflict resolution mechanisms and traditional peacebuilding methods have survived the onslaught of colonialism. Some of our most popular indigenous peacebuilding approaches include Sue for Peace (Mediation), Accommodation, Reconciliation and Negotiation.

The Anglophone crisis in Cameroon escalated in 2016 after a peaceful protest by teachers and lawyers was met with violence from Cameroon Military. With four years past and government efforts to control the situation failed; the anglophones have baptized their territory "Ambazonia" and are seeking total separation from the Republic of Cameroon. A demand which has led to over 12000 civilian loss, 1091 dead on the part of the military with

more than 437.000 internally displaced, over 20.000 refugees in neighboring Nigeria and several others unaccounted for living in bushes (UN source 2018)

This deplorable situation led to the intervention of women Peacebuilders who strive to maintain or achieve long lasting peace. The most productive Indigenous peacemaking approach that has been used by some women peacebuilders is the "SUE FOR PEACE" approach, today known as the "Mediation Approach". This method of peacemaking entails communicating with the warring parties, acting as a bridge or middleman in order to understand what their plights are, what triggered the situation at hand, how to return to sustainable peace and nuances.

The advantage of this approach is forging a platform of confidence where, the people involve can express their grievance, receive solution for sustainable peace and experience a display of trust and goodwill. Inter-tribal wars resulting from land disputes between Bali Chamba, Bali Gashu and other surrounding tribes were solved by women using this peacemaking approach.

Women were very active in conflict prevention and sustainable peace as the impact of war was greatly felt by them. Women were always vulnerable during war and after. They faced new challenges and inherited additional responsibilities in post- conflict period. When a war broke out, women SUE FOR PEACE using their secret society known as KAHWALOH this was an independent organ which constituted women of a certain age who had as duty maintaining peace in the society. The KAHWALOH operated with diplomacy that could never be disputed in an event of a war, a selected few known as PEACE ENVOYS were sent with peace plants (Nkeng Nkeng) to warring parties to encourage them on the need for peace. If they fail to adhere to this peace talks, the Kahwaloh will proceed by going to the war front and interposing themselves between the fighters. It was forbidden to kill women and children as this could bring ill omen to the society.

Fighters who mistakenly shot women were ritually purified. If this move failed (an almost impossible situation), these women proceeded by stripping themselves naked and performing a peaceful walk in the community.

The consequences of this were grievous as it could plague the community with a curse. The association of elderly women was highly respected even by Fons. It was believed that if these elderly women expose their nakedness to a person, that person will suffer a curse that will manifest as madness and eventual death. However, Suing for Peace (otherwise known as Mediation in present day) has its nuances; some of which could lead to a drastic turn of events, as seen in today's Cameroon Anglophone crisis.

After a failed mediation "National Dialogue" in 2019, there has been increasing number of police brutality, unlawful arrests, burning down of entire villages, beheadings and complete lock down. Not leaving out the case of Mali where a failed mediation by ECOWAS leaders led to the arrest of president IBK by the Junta. The role of women in conflict resolution has been and is still relevant in present day Ambazonia Crisis/political situation in Cameroon. It has been used in the post electoral crisis, when maître Michele Ndoki and comrades took to peaceful protest but where met with tough resistance from the military. This ended them gunshots and eventual prison terms from the ruthless Cameroon military. Yet this could be a recommended peacemaking approach provided police brutality is forbidden. Pride, complete refusal or disobedience from warring parties to submit to mediation births the "Accommodation Approach".

It is similar to Acceptance that is, agreeing to live in conflict or disagreement by the warring parties.

This approach to me is the most challenging phase in a crisis as it most often breathes desperation which sometimes lead to hostility as seen below. The early 2000s was shrieked with the barbaric killing of the Fon of Babanki (Bamenda) by his subjects. Late Fon Vugah Simon hit the nerves of his subjects by selling cultural artefacts, destroying ancestral shrines, seizing land from people's wives and his brothers and unilaterally selling some fertile farmlands to a certain Alhadji Y.Danpullo, against his late father Fon Vubansgi's will, Babanki farmers attacked Danpullo's cattle, which grazed on their land causing damage to crops.

In retaliation, the graziers burnt 200 farmhouses and barns of foodstuff. Several farmers were arrested, tortured and detained. Due to these problems created and unable to be resolved, the fon was later dethroned and forced to write a resignation letter. Once caught sneaking into the palace, he was escorted to the borders of Babanki by his former subjects with the intention to beat and abandon him there. That did not seem to satisfy the enraged Babanki people and they set him ablaze. This was an exceptional case where the leader had to pay the price of unrest. It is the civilians who often pay the price of problems created by their leaders. As seen in the Ngarbuh massacre with the dead of innocent children and women, the present situation in #Bamenda with the government placing a ban on the circulation of motor bikes in order to curb movement of Ambazonian fighters; the fighters reacted to this by placing a ban on the circulation of vehicles leading to a complete lock down of the entire region. A pathetic situation that is causing hardship to the population and has led to loss of lives.

The « Reconciliation Approach" is a phase I particularly enjoy. This is because it strengthens ties amongst disputing parties. It is said that the life cycle of a war is 30 years. Implying time heals all things, there comes a time when grievances are overlooked, and entities opt for peace. Reconciliation builds respect, confidence and ties between warring parties as they mutually agree to set aside their differences and establish an atmosphere where they can both coexist. Parties with the presence of an overseer decide to lay down rules, regulations and sanctions they both abide to. Reconciliation approach is most cherished as it not only heals psychological trauma but helps in integrating ex-combatants back into society as well as an avenue for community building.

«Negotiation Approach » This is a back paddle to the mediation approach as this is discussion aimed at reaching an agreement. However, this approach too is highly applauded for us mediators since all we desire is sustainable peace. It aims at ending conflict entirely by addressing structural causes of the conflict. This approach can be handy to the present situation of Cameroon given that some of the root causes of the crisis are structural. After the failed National dialogue, the Accommodation and Reconciliation approaches became impossible. Even the proposed Swiss Talk has been unable to materialise; both parties have expressed unwillingness to reconcile ; the Cameroon government refuses to discuss the nature of the state while the Ambazonians maintain their position of separation and independence. One can rightfully say traditional conflict resolution approaches are best and surpass western approaches as they are open, all-inclusive and reflect the socio-political orientation of Africans. Addressing all political, social and economic conflicts amongst a people who had a communal lifestyle.

TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO PREVENT, MANAGE AND RESOLVE CONFLICT

BY ELISE DIFFO

As part of the project "support to improve the representation of Pygmy and Bororo women of the Eastern Region of Cameroon during the 2018 elections" supported financially by the United States Department of State in Cameroon, and implemented by More Women in Politics in collaboration with the State of Cameroon.

The main aim of this project is to make a significant contribution to improving inclusive governance in Cameroon by increasing the participation and representativeness of vulnerable groups in the collective process. It is about promoting the expression and political participation of indigenous women in the selected sites; in order to ensure better respect for their civil, political and policy rights and the consideration of their specific interests in the definition and conduct of public policies at the local level, which has mainly aimed at preventing, managing and resolving socio-political conflicts in the landlocked areas of Eastern Cameroon.

The impact of the project

Indigenous Pygmy and Bororo women participate massively in the electoral process in the eastern region, actively

contributing to the reduction and control of social political conflicts that may arise from pre-election, electoral and post-election litigation by 2018. Volunteers urge their peers to participate in elections;

- Volunteers do participate in electoral operations (registration, card withdrawal, voting);
- Volunteers write memoranda to politicians;
- Volunteers know the games and issues of political participation;
- About 1,310 people, including nearly 730 rural women and 580 men, improve their democratic and civic knowledge and effectively participate in voting and observing the electoral process.

More than 1000 indigenous people (Batouri and Yokadouma) benefited from the project "to support the improvement of the representation of Pygmy and Bororos women of the East-Cameroon region in the 2018 elections called DEMOCRATIE WITH AUTOCHTONES 2018

ESWATINI

SWAZILAND RURAL WOMEN'S ASSEMBLY AN INDIGENOUS GROUP LEADING IN PEACEMAKING THROUGH ENGAGING WITH TRADITIONAL LEADERS AS AN ACT OF SOLIDARITY

BY Colani Hlatjwakko

In Eswatini, the Swaziland Rural Women's Assembly (SRWA) which is a self-organized network of national rural women's movements is involved in peacebuilding in their communities to address issues related to women's rights violations with Traditional Leaders. SRWA is one of the organizations that supports the **One Billion Rising campaign**. A global campaign that is aimed at ending violence against women and girls. It believes in solidarity and this is exactly what this group emulated in its approach.

In their communities these women have been leading in engaging with traditional leaders to ensure that issues that are related to women are addressed in a fair manner in accordance with the law.

Eswatini is a country which is vested into its culture, and because of the patriarchal system, culture is often used to oppress or disadvantage women. A larger portion of Eswatini is rural and it is under Chiefs who are foot stools to the King. The Chiefs have a council (*Bandlancane*) which presides over matters reported to the chief's place (*Umphakatsi*). Most of the time a woman when abused or violated runs first to the Chief's place since it is within the community. Upon realizing the increase of women's rights violations in rural areas SRWA Membership organized themselves in the different communities to engage with the **bandlancane** on behalf of the affected woman to ensure that when they preside over matters, justice

served. *“We believe in solidarity, if one woman has been affected/abused we see it also our duty to intervene so that the same does not happen to another woman”* said Cebile Dlamini who is Secretary General of SRWA. They have realized that when a woman is not supported by other women, she gets victimized by the council and also other family members, which has resulted in some women not willing to report their cases. SRWA is recognized by the traditional leaders and their advocacy has managed to put pressure to the traditional leaders to ensure that women’s rights are respected at the community level.

SRWA is also leading in engaging with traditional leaders to ensure that women are not forced to leave their matrimonial home because the man wants to marry another wife, or in-laws forcing the woman to leave after the death of her husband (which has been commonly happening). The challenge is that under Swazi Law and Customs, after marriage a certificate is not taken. Based on this members of SRWA demanded that traditional leaders intervene and protect these women, and also ensure that all women married under Swazi Law and Custom in the communities have marriage certificates.

“We believe in solidarity, if one woman has been affected/abused we see it also our duty to intervene so that the same does not happen to another woman”

SRWA is also concerned with how land in the Swazi nation is distributed. There are still communities that do not allow unmarried women or those with no male offspring to own land. Another approach that they use is to ensure that women are economically empowered to enable them to leave abusive relationships. Research has proved that most women stay in abusive relationships because they are financially dependent on their abusers.

SRWA is organizing women in communities to start farming, beading and selling home made products like, floor polish, liquid soap, etc. A lot of positive changes have been seen in different communities through SRWA's advocacy or approaches which has brought change to women’s lives in Eswatini.



GHANA

The Young Queen Mother

BREAKING BARRIERS

By Rev. Kesia Bijou Birch

It was such a delight listening to this young lady Queen Mother as she narrated how she used indigenous strategies bringing positive change and peace in her community. The deciding factor for choosing a Queen Mother or Chief is sex/gender or age, but rather meeting the Qualities the community is seeking in the Legitimate recipient of the Title to rule and sit on the Traditional Stool.

The Stool on which Mama Klebetesi III sits was vacant for 30 years due to controversies on who is to be chosen – a chief or a Queen Mother from two families of the same Clan. It was a long standing conflict that took the two families to the courts and other authorities.

Shrouded in mystery, the forcefully installed chief from one of the families died mysteriously. Finally, the spirit of the Stool was invoked into the family of “afevia me” and it “chose” Mam Klebetesi III, the young woman. Stepping out in confidence and humility after her coronation, the young Queen Mother explained to her community how important it was for her to ensure her own house is cleaned before venturing to the entire community.

She used the proverbs below in explaining her intention and getting the buy-in of her plans of going to the root of the conflict in the community and especially the controversies around the Stool that was a conflict between the 2 families for 30 long years.

**TABABLA, AFE
WOTSONA**

before stepping out in public, you must ensure the wrapper on your head is well fixed and beautiful

**HAFI NADE ATSIKPO
LE AMEADE FE NKU
DZIA, ELE NAWO BE
NADE TORWOA GBA**

before you can remove the log on your neighbor's eye, you need to take yours off first

These proverbs led the Clans of the two families agree to sit and have discussions around the issues, analyzing what exactly the “Log” in their eyes was and how together they could take it away or work on it.

In indigenous parlance, the wrapping of the head means ensuring you look at yourself and ensure all that pertains to your life is in good order so that as you step out in public, you are admired and cited as a good example. Drawing on this meaning, she was able to organize the Clan heads and the family into a committee and leveraging on the fact that she was chosen by the Stool itself (a matter of spirituality), she led the discussions and an agreement was arrived to let go of the past issues and recognize that they were the same people seeking peace and development of the community.

Based on the inhouse cleaning and reconciliation, Mama Klebetesi III brought together all clan Heads of the community into a committee who in turn spoke with their clan men and women – a process that culminated in a grand Durbar that brought all the community members together including those from the Urban areas.

She furthermore leveraged on the “Daughter - parent and Daughter- grandparent” relationship, an indigenous practice that allows for the young to relate easily with the elders, be listened to and be supported in any venture in the life of the community. This practice she says has caused elderly men and women alike in her community to support her efforts in bringing peace and development. They have always availed themselves whenever they are needed to intervene or solicited as clans to put their clan men and women together in working for the development of the community.

Mama Klebetesi III has been focusing on the welfare and development of girls and young women of her community. She seeks funds to establish “gari”, a local food factory to give employment opportunities to women and she promotes the products in the Urban Centre. She also makes time in sensitizing girls on several issues including sexual harassment, sexual violence such as rape and educates parents on the need of bringing to a stop early marriage and teenage pregnancy.

The success of these interventions have made this young Queen Mother a rallying point for her community.

Heads of Clans of the community who are men openly declare their trust in her ability to facilitate resolution of conflicts in their respective clans. “I feel it is a privilege for me to serve my people, most of them are older than me, more educated in some cases than me but they respect me as a young person placed in a high position as their Queen Mother.

I feel I can use my position to bring positive change, a process I have started and it is working for us”. “For me, my leadership is about inclusivity, thus bringing the young and the old together and sharing ideas so there is ownership of the entire process and sustainability of our interventions.” Clearly, women and young women are contributing to the WPS Agenda at the grassroots level with tangible impacts; A contradiction of the perception that there are several barriers preventing young women from participating and making impact.

KENYA.

The Kitui - Tana Border Conflict

***NOT EVEN DUST WILL STOP
US***

*Kenyan women living at the border of Kitui-
Tana river, respond to the conflict*

**Conflicts emanating from land
invasion and banditry is a common
problem in Kenya especially in areas
where pastoralists and farmers border
each other. The community- tension
resulting from such clashes usually
ends up in widespread illegal acts and
generally hinders efforts geared
towards peace and development in the
affected areas.**

There has been animosity between the Somali camel herders and the Kamba community along the Kitui- Tana River border /Garissa Counties since time immemorial. The violence mostly happens during the dry season when herders move around looking for pasture for their camels.

Kitui which is in the north east of Kenya is inhabited by Kamba community and several other minor Kenyan communities like Somalis. It shares its borders with 7 counties including Garissa which it borders to the east. It borders Tana River County to the east and south-east. Tana River is home to communities like Ogaden, Degodia and Pokomo (the predominant ethnic grouping) – many of whom are farmers, but pastoral communities are also present i.e. the Somali- speaking Wardey and Orma, who live side by side along the Tana River.

The lack of long-term solution to this has seen these conflicts turning into ethnic rivalry between the Kamba and Somali communities and now, into inter- county conflict.

When these conflicts occur, people have to flee from their homes and especially women and children suffer the most. Learning is disrupted because schools have to close, lives are lost and property destructed.



The local residents have accused government of slow action and even though the government deploys security on the ground, the community claims that they just do road patrols which isn't enough to drive away the armed attackers. Further the Kenyan government has been accused of turning a blind eye to over 5,000 people illegally living in South Kitui Game Reserve, some of whom are feared to be illegal foreigners and terror agents responsible for constant bandit attacks.

Such accusations and assumptions therefore have contributed to residents taking drastic measures in their hands.

The local Member of County Assembly (MCA) for Ngomeni ward has for example been reported to have walked 34 camels from Ngomeni to Kyuso, a distance of 25 KMs. He walked the camels to the Deputy County Commissioner's office (DCC) office in Kyuso District claiming that they had destroyed crops of his local people.

Women in the frontline

In October 2017, a group of more than 200 women from Kitui County converged at a central place in Ngomeni. They were not alone; men too were present. Here, they would meet with their political leaders to discuss the recent attacks that had occurred between the Kambas and Somalis living some of the locals dead. These women came from the nearby makeshift camps where the government had put them after running away from their homes for fear of reprisal attacks. The meeting would start as the normal government meetings do. The junior officials took to the podium one after another consoling the affected and promising to respond to their woes.

The time came for the local senator to give his remarks and hell broke loose. Donned in their lesos and head scarves, the women started moving in the front one after the other. At this moment, the senator who was speaking to the congregation, lamenting and assuring them of his support and that action was going to be taken was amused and he stopped speaking. By who and when? seemed to be the questions that women were grumbling with. Not known to him the plans that women had; the senator kept holding the mic.

By now, the women had already occupied the space between the leaders and the community, they positioned themselves well and did their thing. They removed their headscarves and lesos and started rolling down the flow with cries that would sent the guests away. They broke into tears and cries over the continued violence in their community. They cried for their dear children, husbands, sisters, brothers and community at large. Some of them were heard saying that they had been rendered widows and many children orphaned over the years in an endless cycle of banditry. “We are tired of empty promises” they cried.

This approach prompted the premature closure of the meeting BUT what happened next goes to show the power of indigenous women approaches to peace. The senator and other leaders present took action. In collaboration with the National government, they organized for security personnel who arrived at the scene the following day and drove the bandits away.

Wrestling for Peace

by Rose Mulaah

African peace, unity and security lies with African People themselves. I come from a place where two ethnic communities, the Luos (Nilotics) and Lukyas (Bantus), living in Western parts of Kenya with diverse norms and values border each other, and conflicts were common when we were growing up.

For instance, conflicts between individuals or group of herdsmen as they seek grazing space/area for animals. When two herdsmen had a disagreement, the governing rules were that each party reports the matter to the Elders (these comprise of, appointed mature, men of understanding full of wisdom) who are role models in the community. The elders would assess the conflict and give their verdict and advise the conflicting individual or groups to pursue peace by all means.

In cases where the conflict persists, the elders resolve to summon the two individuals or groups to settle their issues at the wrestling festival, which was held on the afternoon of the last Friday of every month. The festival attracted people of all ages, and from all walks of life, youth, women, men and of course elders.

After the belligerents wrestle, the winner and the defeated make peace in front of all those who have gathered for the festival.

They performed the "shaking of hands" to signify an end to the tensions that might have existed .

The wrestling festival made youths develop relationships that led to inter marriages, which were along the way were building everlasting peace and security between the communities. During wrestling people entered into business partnerships; sale of land and animals and other properties. Traditional wrestling was not only a tool to resolve conflicts but also sport entertainment, social economic weapon and networking forums for peace, security and stability.

The role of women in the community was peacebuilding and stability. During wrestling matches, they cheer the wrestlers without taking sides through songs with messages of peace and victory. The presence of women in wrestling festivals or any gathering was a symbol for family peace and unity, as the culture did not allow women to go to war.

In the current dispensation, the above approach may not hold water, but as FemWise-Africa Network (Women and youths) we can think of initiatives targeting the entire African Continent with the message of "Peace and Security" at National, Regional and Continent levels. Long Live FemWise Africa Network.

MADAGASCAR

**TRADITIONAL APPROACH TO RESTORING
AND CONSOLIDATING PEACE FOR WOMEN**

BY RASOLOARISOA MARIE MARCELLINE

In Madagascar, there are two types of traditional approaches to how women play a role in peacemaking and peacebuilding.

The **community approach** through the application of the "DINA", and woman as a **traditional authority** (princess or descendant of a royal lineage) and/or woman holding the **Zomba**.

What is DINA?

Dina is a set of customary and community rules of organization of society, mainly the in landlocked regions of 'Menabe, Atsimo Andrefana Region, and Androy. The Dina varying from region to region is called upon and instituted by the will of the people.

They are generally instated to combat **Dahalo**, which is organized gang activity. But they can also be adopted to govern community work. If Dina is not applied, the community can impose **Vonodina**, which are sanctions or penalties that can take the form of in kind payments to capital punishment.

In traditional Malagasy society, customary laws and norms govern society. It organizes life and rules family and community relations. Traditionally, it is the opposite of women's rights. Indeed, the patriarchal structure places men at the head of the village or community. But in the face of rising insecurity, women from ethnic groups in southern Madagascar (red, arid, pastoral areas and plagued by dahalo attacks) have revolutionized approaches to women's participation in peace-building.

Forced to flee their homes, raped, and faced with the threat of the abduction of **Varira** children, Malagasy women, especially the **Antandroy, Bara, Masikoro and Sakalava**, started playing an active role in the prevention and management of conflicts in their region.

Method of intervention

These women organize and lobby the village chiefs, and even participate in the response against the dahalo attacks. They attend meetings while remaining discreet, as a show of respect to the customary laws and traditions. Waiting patiently they let the men discuss, but do not accept the closing of the session without giving their opinions and suggestions with the village chief's wife as their spokesperson. They support in the development implementation and follow-up of the Dina.

Women as Traditional Authorities

The history of Madagascar has been marked by the reign of 5 queens:

Ranavalona I

who is considered the greatest queen of the kingdom of Madagascar because of her strong character and her authority. She was a very austere, even cruel, queen who had no mercy for those who broke her laws.

Rasoherina

who was a wise and determined queen.

Ranavalona II,

Christian, she brought Western civilization.

Queen Rasalimo

Hero of the Sakalava kingdom

Ranavalona III

The last queen of the Malagasy kingdom (1883-1896) who reigned during the gradual colonization of the country and the abolition of the monarchy. She was exiled to Reunion Island and then to Algiers and was unable to return to the country alive.

In the monarchical world, women used to play a significant role in the life of the community. This authority is still preserved by their descendents, who continue to influence the society in various spheres, including peace-building. As the head of the traditional authority, they often preside over the *Zomba, a sacred place where the relics of past kings are deposited, and which also serves as a place of worship, a temple of sorts*. These descendents preside over the Federation of the Traditional Royal Communities in each of their localities. Their authority at times taking precedence over the regional authority. During elections, it is not uncommon for candidates to seek their blessing and advice.

Method of intervention

Being a princess in their area is equivalent to being a head of state. Initiatives go through them and the *Zomba*. With an advisory board of sorts, the princess deliberates and delivers her decision, which is rarely refused. This tradition plays a big role as a mechanism for conflict management.

Limites de la participation traditionnelle des femmes

In Madagascar, the level participation of women in these traditional mechanisms differs from one ethnicity or region to the other. It is higher in societies where custom and traditions are still respected. To prevent malpractice during the application of *dina*, the State enacted [Law No. 2001-004 of 25 October 2001](#) providing a regulation of the practice. But it is not often adopted due to a fear of the potential abuse by judicial officers and the politicization of the system.

MOROCCO.

**WOMEN AND THE TRADITIONS OF
MEDIATION AND PEACEFUL
CONFLICTS RESOLUTION IN
MOROCCO**

**by Khadija Elmadmad, Najat Adelati and
Kawtar Khalil**

Peaceful conflicts resolution is deeply rooted in Moroccan traditions derived from its multiple cultural affiliations sub-saharan Africa Africa, the Mediterranean and the Arab and Muslim worlds as well as from the different religions practiced by its inhabitants at various times in its history and particularly Islam.

Islam considers peaceful resolution of conflicts as a duty (*wajib*) of every Muslim and reserves retribution (*jazaa*) for mediators. Several verses from the Qur'an recommend turning to a third party to bring the conflicting parties together.

Mediation is an ancient social practice in Morocco. Several popular proverbs call for using the services of a neutral person (*hakam*) to solve problems.

Many Moroccan women have been active in the past and are still active in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts, using traditional approaches. These women are generally wise, educated, experienced and have good relationships. People seek their advice and listen to them.

MOROCCAN WOMEN INVOLVED IN PEACEFUL CONFLICTS RESOLUTION IN THE PAST AND THEIR PRESENT IMPACT IN THE COUNTRY

Throughout the Moroccan history, different women have been sources of peace. Two significant examples have been selected: in the 14th century, that of Lalla Aziza El-Saksawia, the social mediator in inter-community and intertribal conflicts and in the 18th century, that of Princess Khnata bent Baccar, the negotiator in international, social, administrative and economic affairs.

These two women still have a certain impact in the country.

Lalla Aziza El-Saksawia

She was a pious and discreet young Berber woman belonging to the Saksawa tribe in southern Morocco. In the traditional and patriarchal society of the High Atlas where she lived, she played a historic role in resolving conflicts between the members of her community, tribes, and rulers and also between migrants and their hosts during the second half of the 14th century.

She was exemplary by her actions and by her faith and a social and religious mediator who had contributed a lot through her knowledge and her actions to the achievement of social and political peace and also to the internal peace and tranquillity of the members of her community. Her mediation sessions were public and all were invited to attend these

sessions. Many examples of her mediations in different armed, social, family, commercial, administrative and political conflicts are reported by historians. Until now, her tomb is sacred and remains a place of pilgrimage. The tribes organize an annual gathering in her memory and sing her name: Takramat (the Saint).

A religious institution is dedicated to her in the region: Zawiyat Lalla Aziza. Her descendants have preserved her tradition of mediating and preventing conflicts peacefully, especially those conflicts relating to access to water. A weekly souk (market) is also held every Thursday today in the city of Imintanout (near Agadir) during

which disputes are resolved peacefully. The Zawiya has good relations with the administration, which uses its mediation services in various conflicts. Over time, the social impact of Zawiyat Lalla Aziza El-Saksawia has increased and it has become now a meeting place for people seeking to resolve any disputes.

Princess Khnata bint Bakkar

She was from the Sahara and was the first Moroccan woman minister and ambassador. She was quite active in resolving conflicts and negotiating peace for more than 30 years in the 18th century, during the reign of three Moroccan kings.

She was an educated woman who led several negotiation and conflict prevention missions between opposing Moroccan and foreign parties and who facilitated the conclusion of several peace agreements and the release of prisoners of war. Many countries have requested her mediation in conflicts with

the Sultans: Spain, England, France, Holland, Libya (then Tripoli), Portugal etc. For example, Khnata played a leading role in the conclusion of the peace and trade agreement with England in 1721. Correspondence still traces the request for her support for concluding this agreement and her mediation to free British prisoners.

In 1736, she intervened to resolve peacefully the border conflict between the inhabitants of the city of Oujda in eastern Morocco and the Turks who ruled Algeria at that time. She was in contact with the members of her community

through her charitable activities and she used to conduct social mediation. She had ties with the military that she used in mediating armed conflicts.

To bring the parties in conflicts together, she used her great diplomacy and her broad knowledge to choose the techniques appropriate to each situation and dispute and specific to the opposing parties. The pilgrimage to Mecca was, for instance, an opportunity for her to confirm her piety and pacifist wisdom and promote the Muslim principles of peace (salam).

The institutionalization of traditional mediation practices in current Morocco

The peaceful methods of conflict resolution stem today from strong Moroccan traditions. Some of these traditions have been institutionalized and also modernized in some areas. Mediation is now practiced individually by men and women: judges, lawyers, social workers, religious and administrative mediators etc. It is also exercised by institutions: the Mediator of the Kingdom, some mediation offices and centres and by NGOs. It is a hybrid mediation which uses traditional and modern techniques of conciliation.

Traditional mediation and modern mediation in Morocco today.

Modern mediation uses recent and specific techniques. In order to remedy the shortcomings of justice, the legislator introduced, for the first time in Morocco, modern regulations relating to conventional mediation, enshrined in Law 08-05 on arbitration and mediation of November 30, 2007.

Conventional mediation is the contract by which the parties agree to appoint a mediator for facilitating the conclusion of a transaction in order to put an end to a dispute which exists or might exist in future. It is inspired by international law and applies mainly in the field of business and commercial and labour disputes.

Institutional administrative mediation dealing with grievances against public administration, through the Mediator of the Kingdom (similar to that of the Ombudsman in Europe), is also based generally on modern conflict resolution techniques.

But, mediation and its techniques remain traditional in other areas such as in family disputes. For example, in divorce petitions, it is a mandatory procedure.

The court summons first of all the spouses for an attempt of conciliation through a third person. This is done according to the traditional and religious practice of calling upon a third person, hakam, (mediator / conciliator) to resolve disputes which has been institutionalized and integrated in the text of the current Family Law (Moudouwana) of 2004 (articles 81, 82 and 83).

The Code details the techniques used in this conciliation by providing that "the court may take all necessary measures, including mandating two arbitrators or the family council or any person it considers qualified". It adds: "If there are children, the court will make two attempts of conciliation, spaced at least by thirty days".

Mediation remains traditional as well in disputes concerning craftsmanship and ordinary business transactions which are settled by a traditional mediator, Al-amine (the provost of craftsmen and traders). He is generally an experienced person, elected and called upon in the event of a dispute to assist the parties in finding a compromise.

NGOs are also active, in the cities and in the countryside, to find common ground in various conflicts, including family conflicts, violence and between migrants and their hosts. They use both traditional and modern approaches, such as active listening or psychological support.

Models of traditional mediation in Morocco today

Two models represent this mediation today: Laarifa (the administrative mediator) and Al-Morchida (the religious mediator). These two types of traditional mediators are effective especially in the rural world which remains largely traditional and patriarchal and where women are victims of all kinds of conflicts: family, economic, administrative and violence. In this cultural context which imposes gender separation and discretion, in order to resolve their conflicts peacefully, women who are generally illiterate, turn to traditional female mediation.

The Administrative Mediator: Laarifa

An interview with Laarifa informed about the important role she continues to play in resolving disputes. She intervenes in family conflicts and in problems of battered women. She collects and reports the testimonies and points of view of women to the opposing male party. She tries to soften the atmosphere and push the parties towards reconciliation. She often succeeds in dissuading the opposing parties to restore peace.

She also intervenes in criminal and commercial disagreements and testifies for the benefit of women in the courts. She is attached to the Ministry of Interior and reports about her actions to this Ministry and to the Ministry of Justice too.

The Religious Mediator: Al-Morchida

The trust placed in Al-morchida stems from her religious status. Her tools for conflict resolution are religion and pragmatism. The techniques she uses are taken from religion and adapted to the victim's context, which makes them acceptable to both parties. Al-morchida adopts pacifist attitudes and takes into consideration the points of view of both sides, regardless of the gravity of the situation.

Al-morchida receives training in traditional mediation from a specialized institute. She advocates a pacifist, fair and liberal Islam. Since 2015, the institution of Al-morchida has started to play an important role in the prevention of religious extremism and in the fight against social violence (mainly gender-based violence).

The advantages and limitations of traditional approaches to conflict resolution and prevention used by women and the need to promote them

The use of traditional approaches to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts by women is necessary in all conservative, patriarchal and unequal communities where women are often unable to expose their problems in public and confront men. In these communities, women suffer all kinds of violence (physical, psychological and economic) but they tend to hide their difficulties and seek help outside and only in case of urgent need.

Thus, traditional female mediation becomes an asset in bringing justice to these women and restoring lasting peace in families and in the whole community. Mediation by a respected woman who uses techniques acceptable to all in order to find solutions to disputes facing women in the community or in the family could encourage these women to present their point of view and give their opinion about the

possible solutions. For example, experience has shown in Morocco that women living conflicts problems feel freer and more supported in the presence of a female mediator. However, women are not associated to all traditional mediations and are excluded from certain fields which have always been and remain "reserved for men". This is the case in Morocco of the institution of Al-amin where only men can practice mediation concerning disputes between craftsmen and traders.

Another mediation from which women are generally excluded is international mediation. Princess Khnata bent Bakar, the s mediator in international disputes, seems to have been an exception in Morocco and very few other Moroccan women have been or are currently involved in international peace talks. For example, recently, during the inter-Libyan parliamentary dialogue of last September to resolve the current Libyan crisis, which was held in Bouznika thanks to the mediation of Morocco and which ended with a consensual agreement on the parameters and criteria of allocating posts of sovereignty in Libya, no woman was included in the Moroccan mediation group. The two Libyan delegations did not include women either. The exclusion of Moroccan women from international peace talks could, perhaps, explain why Princess Khnata bent Bakkar remains little known in the country and why her international conciliation and negotiation techniques are not widely reported and adopted. Only one mosque bears her name in Meknes, although she deserves to be known and recognized as the "greatest international mediator" in Moroccan history.

This challenge seems to be the same for all women, everywhere in the world and more particularly in the African continent and in the North African region. This explains and justifies the adoption of UN resolution 1325 which requires the different parties to a conflict to respect the rights of women and to support their participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction. It should be noted that this resolution was initiated in 2000 by an African woman, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, then Minister of Women's Affairs of Namibia, during the presidency of this country of the Security Council. To meet the challenge of excluding women from mediation and conflicts prevention, it would be necessary to "re-read" the history of feminine in Morocco, in Africa and elsewhere and to promote women mediators everywhere. Traditional approaches should also be promoted at local, national, regional and also universal levels, together with modern techniques. The networks of women mediators for peace have a big role to play in this action and particularly FemWise-Africa.

MAURITANIA.

I am Mrs Maty Boide, a member of FemWise-Africa since January 2020.

The story I am going to tell takes place in 1998 in the region of Hodh Chargui in the commune of Achimime. The tribal community from which I came experienced a socio-political conflict in 1996.

The conflict was sparked when the Mayor appointed his son-in-law, a wealthy businessman, to the Congress of the State Party, dividing the tribe into two groups.

During the visit of the President of the Republic in June 1998, Achimimes and members of other tribes attending the occasion gathered to welcome the president. It was at a time when the conflict was at its peak. The conflicting groups came with their own logistics (cars, tents, utensils, carpets, mattresses, dishes and food and livestock), to attend the occasion.

As for me, I took an administrative leave to take part in the event with my mother and brother. Having arrived the day before the arrival of the presidential motorcade, which was expected the next day at 6pm, I took a drive around the camp to analyze and assess how blatant the separation was. The tents of two camps were erected on either side of a 1000-metre avenue.

After observing this, without much reflection, I went to the Mayor and met the son-in-law.

I was welcomed by the two men to whom I explained and described the situation, telling them that we had all come for the same cause, and that we must set aside our differences and combine our efforts to welcome our common guest.

The mayor was very receptive to my remarks and immediately appointed a committee of 4 men and 4 women, and urged them to accompany me to see my group. I led the committee to my group, who were pleasantly surprised to see the committee of the other group come to see them. They believed that the committee had taken the first steps towards reconciliation.

The designated committee was expanded by 8 additional members from my group, including myself and my mother, who was appointed as chair (a precondition of our group). The committee immediately began its work by inventorying each other's logistical resources. With the effort of both groups, an alley of 1 km of tents was erected on either side with a decorated entrance gate leading to the town hall. My mother, who is a very

wise person, sealed the truce by organizing an art festival on the same night, which brought the two groups together.

Also to avoid the escalation of the conflict in the presence of our guests, the two most aggressive people from both sides were identified and expelled from the camp before the arrival of the procession, in order to better ensure a reception without problems. Due to my audacity and my transactions, the presidential reception was one of the best in the region.

The President of the Republic spent the night in our community and granted several hearings to our notables, hearings that I had to organize with the mayor and the state protocol. This event at the time was the trigger for the settlement of the conflict. The conflict was settled in the same year, and the next mayoral elections were won by my group.

NIGER

The Ngo Women, Action and Development (Fad Niger)

By Kaltani Bokossa

Founded in 2009 and led by a woman, the NGO **Women, Actions and Development (FAD Niger)** is an organization that fights for the promotion of women's rights in Niger and whose main mission is to strengthen the capacity and participation of women and girls in the development of their communities.

Faced with the growing security threat in the southwestern area of Niger, the NGO FAD works tirelessly in the peaceful resolution of conflicts through the involvement of women and young people in peace processes. It also conducts research to analyze the phenomenon of insecurity and identify traditional mechanisms and methods for conflict management.

In a study done in the Tillabéry region of Niger, 91% of those who participated argued that there are mechanisms to prevent and resolve potential or violent forms of antagonism within or between communities. These arrangements are traditional, community-based and showcase a diversity of actors, from the local to the national level.

Village or tribal leaders

leads the conflict reconciliation efforts within their constituencies. In the case of a successful process, the chief drafts an agreement to be signed by the conflicting parties and witnesses. In most cases, the Chiefs or tribal leaders are assisted by religious authorities.

Consulting the Wise

When a conflict breaks out between members of a community, the wise are called upon by third parties. The Wise bring the conflicting parties together to hear each version of the story and attempt to solve the issue.

The Process of Consensus Building

This process favoured by community leaders

promotes meetings and exchanges between the various actors in the community in order to contain latent conflicts. This scheme also leads to a consensus between opposing parties. This mechanism is recognized by all actors within the community as being effective at conflict management and resolution.

Promoting social ties

is a strong and effective communal system that contributes to conflict prevention on the basis of socio-cultural values. It consists of an ancient pact signed between the ancestors of two or more groups to live together in peace and harmony. Its renewal allows the rebuilding of social cohesion and the promotion of social links between different community groups. It also reinforces the sense of togetherness among members of the community, and the reconsideration of the kinship within ethnic groups in a jovial manner.

Tolerance education

Is a means for the community to cultivate a spirit of tolerance by showing all the benefits that it has for the population.

Tolerance, in this case, must be understood as any virtue that encourages people to forgive, exert patience and self-control. It is premised on the fact that conflict prevention is also a matter of respecting the sensitivities of all members of the community.

Peace Committees

The Peace Committee is a local structure composed of men and women volunteers who work to promote social cohesion and prevent conflict. In the context of promoting social cohesion and reconciliation, the peace committee takes into account the dynamics of the groups and their specificities in the resolution of community conflicts. It is based on lived experiences highlighting the culture of peace.

The Resolution of Non-violent Conflicts

This mechanism uses mediation, negotiation and constructive (non-violent) communication as a technique. It involves raising awareness, confronting different points of view, finding solutions, making decisions and following up.

Women find themselves in all these mechanisms of conflict prevention and management but have a less visible role than men.

This is why the NGO ADF is focusing its work on ensuring women are equipped to play an active role within the existing frameworks and beyond.

MALAWI

The Role of Indigenous Women to Bring Peace to their Communities

by Carolien K. Mvalo

Malawi recognises the existence of prominent ethnic associations that have arisen as a result of the constitutional provisions and indeed other ulterior motives. These are the Chewa Heritage Foundation (CHEFO), the Mulakho wa Alhomwe (MWA) and Mzimba Heritage Association (MZIHA) founded by the Chewa, Lhomwe and Ngoni ethnic groups respectively.

Notwithstanding that the post one-party-rule Malawi Constitution has paved way for the formation of these ethnic associations, it is apparent that their activities are a fertile ground for breeding seeds of disunity and consequently threatening the national fabric which if left unabated will degenerate into conflict.

This is more so as these ethnic associations are used as political tools and bases for political parties' support as evidenced by Mulakho wa Alhomwe which has senior politicians in its echelons of leadership.

Therefore, when patronage of such associations embraces presidents, ministers, and other influential elites there is high likelihood for making ethnically is principally aimed at preserving and protecting local cultural practices and religious beliefs. Among the biased and divisive decisions with regards to power and resource distribution. This in turn creates a sense of deprivation as some ethnic associations which are not in power may perceive they are not getting what they rightfully deserve, hence the prevalence of discontent which may blossom into conflict and violence.

This paper therefore intends to look at the traditional approaches that were used to sustain peace and is sorely dependent on the work done by V.K. Sindani (2018) in his partial fulfilment of a master degree in peace and governance in the college of business, peace, leadership and governance titled: 'organized ethnic associations and their implications on peace and nation-building in Malawi: a cross-sectional study'

Ordinarily, the Chiefs, traditional and religious leaders in Malawi are the center for conflict resolution. Traditionally, Malawian societies function through an elaborate system based on the family, the lineage, the clan, the tribe and ultimately a confederation of groups with ethnic, cultural, and linguistic characteristics in common. These are the units of social, economic, and political organizations and inter-communal relations.

Indigenous and local women have made remarkable contributions to the community peace agenda and have pioneered innovative approaches to conflict prevention and justice. This is evident through their experiences of intersectional discrimination, on the basis of their gender identity and minority status, also provide unique perspectives on conflict. These perspectives are a critical resource in our shared effort to build a more peaceful and inclusive communities. They use local courts to pursue justice for conflict-related violence to transform and create a suitable environment for development in the communities.

Women explore their cultural and socio-political roles to contribute to the overall well-being of these societies. Oftentimes, women were symbolised as paragons of morality, sacredness, goodness and tenderness. Indeed, women's existence and power in pre-colonial African societies were based on an ethic of care that was rooted in their motherhood and their nature, which was tolerant of difference, collaborative, non-violent and, as such, peaceful (see Mazurana and McKay 1999).

For example, in their quest to force the members of parliament to pass the budget in 1995 ordinary women across the country in the face of their marginalisation and oppression at the private and public levels of society, mounted vigil at parliament gates not to allow the legislators to come out until the budget was passed in the interest of poor Malawians.

The women prepared technical documents and position papers for the official delegates, lobbied the youths for their support they adopted traditional Malawian women's instruments of drama, poetry and appeal to motherly sacredness including, sometimes, civil disobedience to make their presence felt until the budget was passed.

In another situation, women used their power to withdraw conjugal rights from their husbands and any other men if they refused to listen to the women's appeal to stop the cultural norm of marital passage cleansing which contributed much to the rise of HIV/AIDS transmission, where a man used a hyena to sleep with the girls that had just started their menses and the young women who had lost their husbands. In another scenario women raged a session of fasting and praying with the view to condemn what the catholic priests were deemed doing of sleeping with married women. All these were initiatives taken by local women to try to bring peace in their localities.

We can therefore, conclude that the role of indigenous women in bringing peace in the communities can never be overemphasised, they take every action possible to achieve what is peace.

PROVERBS OF PEACE

BY TIONGE KALUA MHONE

From the earliest times, proverbs have been used in our communities to prevent, manage but also resolve conflicts. Proverbs are sayings that provide wisdom and are passed on from one generation to another generation. They act like a mirror through which the society can look at itself. Some of the main themes in proverbs are love, joy, peace, conflict, friendship and war. They may be similar in different cultures but they may also be totally different based on what they mean and what they are trying to teach. They are usually in oral form but this has changed in the modern world because they can be found in written form. The aim of proverbs is to inform, educate but also preserve cultural norms.

In Malawian culture, there are a number of proverbs that are indigenously used to promote peace and unity but also prevent conflicts. An example of such is the one that says

“one thumb cannot crush a louse”

When the other thumb is left out, the louse cannot be crushed. This proverb is equivalent to the saying that “no man is an island”. This proverb is about unity in strength. Without unity there cannot be any strength. Without unity there cannot be peace. We depend on each other to find the strength to overcome challenges or situations that we are going through.

The second proverb that talks about peace is the one that says

**“what is by itself is an animal, those that are two are
human beings”**

The main important teaching behind this proverb is that two heads are better than one. There is need for cooperation and also solidarity. In the political arena for example, one country cannot do things alone. A country will always depend on another country for things like trade, tourism and also the economy. This is why we have diplomatic embassies among countries all over the world. This is done to co – exist peacefully.

“Two buttocks cannot avoid friction”

is another famous proverb that talks about conflict management and living together peacefully. Conflict is inevitable in life but what matters is how you are able to manage it. This proverb therefore teaches us that we cannot totally avoid conflict because it will always be there. What is needed is to find ways and means of managing whatever conflict that we have so that it does not escalate into any type of violence. This is why negotiation, mediation and arbitration are very important when it comes to managing conflicts and situations that may escalate into violence.

The last proverb that indigenously talks about peace says,

“ one head cannot carry a roof”

This proverb has a teaching of helping each other. There are some things in life that cannot be done alone. They need coming together of different people, countries or organisations so that the task at hand can be done.

The wisdom of our ancestors that has been passed on from generations to generations through proverbs has always taught us that we need each other, we need peace and unity and if there is conflict, we need to find ways of managing that conflict through mediation, arbitration and negotiation.

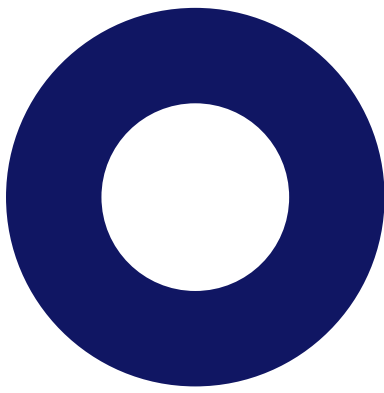
NIGERIA

THE ACCOUNT OF THE IBIBIO WOMEN

BY UDUAK UDOFIA

The Ibibio people of South Eastern extraction of Nigeria have a very rich cultural heritage, from their diverse folklore, culinary skills, trademark of hospitality and close affinity to nature. This may not be surprising as history has it that the Ibiobios are one of the oldest indigenous tribes, if not the mother of the Bantu people of Africa.

The women have traditionally held together the social cohesion of the community. Traditionally, after supper the children will gather round the hut of the mother or grandmother figure to be entertained and mentored. This had been the ways that valuable didactic lessons and values have been passed passed on from generations to generations. Some Peace building activities woven into everyday life of the ibibio women include:



Eto Idaaha

standing tree - Mentoring Access game

This is a subtle game that is normally played on a naive person that visits the home of an ibibio person and when invited to sit down rather chooses to stand. This person would now be asked to please go to the neighbouring hut to help borrow “eto idaaha” and bring back to the person whose house he visited initially.

On getting to that hut, he would be told that they do not have it and that he checks the next hut, he/she may be sent to the next hut and the next one until an elderly person would now just tell the unsuspecting person that there is no such thing as “eto idahaa” but that person should return to the hostess he/she visited and actually accept the seat and hospitality of the hostess. This helps the elderly women have access to the younger generation to mentor/influence them. Imaginary Eto Idaaha game is used as a learning tool for mentoring and influence .

Ekon nke e-e -

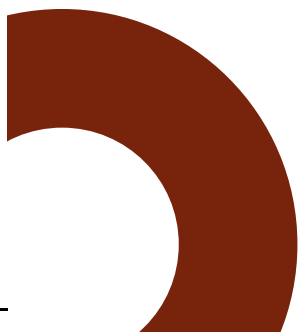
Where is the battle - Storytelling intro

This phrase is the intro used for storytelling. The response would Ekong aka, ekong ayong, ekong isi kpaaha udim (literally, this means that conflicts come and conflicts cease, conflicts are not won by the strength of the host of warriors. The storyteller proceeds to tell didactic stories often punctuated with songs and dances tied to the theme of the story. This further reinforces the the lessons in the stories.

Nda Ke ubok owo

I stand protected by this person’s hand

This is a known practice where anyone can run and hide behind any adult, upon the infractions that are minor and that adult is under a moral duty to protect this person from the penalty that may have been meted out and is expected to immediately mediate on the person’s behalf. Older women typically play this role and therefore contribute significantly to conflict resolution.



Ekpo isi idukoo eko iban

The women's hut/kitchen as a fortress/ Safe zone

Traditionally the Ekpo masquerade were the law enforcement agents of the community.

However, the hut of the women or kitchen area were places that they were not permitted to cross. This served to ensure to esafe zones that anyone could run in to for safety even if you are a stranger.

Iban isong

the women of the land

This is an association of all the daughters of the land that exert influence. They function as an entity with powers to mediate, deliberate on cases and pronounce binding decisions with sanctions for any dehumanizing treatment of a fellow woman.

Uhood

In-Laws

Marriages were sometimes used to seal peace deals between warring communities. Hence special privileges are enjoyed by inlaws by reason of marriage. Marriages in traditional settings carry privileges of special protection inlaws benefit from. This included taking asylum in the inlaw's family and special protection even in instances where one may have been a war fugitive.

Okpongo

Namesake/ god parents relationship

The naming of a child after another person is a strategic consensus building and symbolic action. This had been employed within the extended family system to build closer ties between sometimes antagonistic step siblings and even across communities where animosity previously held sway.

These were some of the creative means ancient Ibibio women used to foster consensus and peace building within and outside their communities, leveraging on their natural roles as women/daughters/mothers/wives and position to exert influence and soft diplomacy.

UGANDA

NAYECHE

THE PEACE GODDESS RECONCILES ATEKER TRIBES

by Bernice Joyce A.S. Nima

Nayeche is said to have been a young girl of 12-15 years of age, born in Kacheri in Kotido District from the Jie tribe. The father married her off to a wealthy old man. *Nayeche* stubbornly refused the marriage in spite of force and beatings. One day as she returned from a well she tripped and the earthen pot broke into pieces. Fearing the torture she was likely to be subjected to, she decided to run away into the wilderness.

She walked from the village eastwards crossing rivers and rested in a cave situated in a hill. The hill was full of fruits and berries and she survived there. She meets a young man with whom she begins a family. Sometime later, a grey bull Engiro followed the same path walked by *Nayeche*, reached and crossed the river to the same hill where *Nayeche* had established her home. She was able to recognize that the bull was from her home so she looked after it, nursed it and used it to breed her own cows. Unlike when *Nayeche* run away, young men were heavily deployed to follow up and track this bull Engiro. The young men found not only Engiro but to their surprise their long lost sister *Nayeche*. The young men took back the happy news and reported how good and fertile the place was and convinced the old men to give them more cows to be graze there, where they returned.

A huge circle of stones and pebbles marks the site where all Turkana speaking communities even from neighbouring countries congregate for a three day festival to celebrate Nayeche. All visitors have to obey the traditional rules, hence a local guide is required.



Unfortunately when the Elders needed some milk and meat and asked the youth to return the cows, they refused. The old people were cross with Nayeche because they suspected her rebellious nature had caught up with the young men. They put a curse on Nayeche for disregarding the authority of the Elders who said in their divine pronouncement...

*Ani era eke-eemit Nayeche anakan kosi
angi'kasikou, Ekepite jik ngolo. Akirimit emam ere
ngolo iboikin jik paka kecamu abongun nakan kosi
nguna pei ongora nu*

Which literally translates to

*If Nayeche has flatly rejected our word and decided
to run away from our hands, then she will never
settle down completely and will never have a
homestead to settle into and will continue to roam
and flee, until she or her descendants choose to come
back to these our own very dirty hands*

On her death bed Nayeche pledged to reconcile the Jie and Turkana. In the 1990s and 2000-2010 heavy raids/ counter raids and conflict raged between the Jie and Turkana which were only stopped when Nayeche appeared to diviners from Jie and Turkana and reminded them of her pledge to reconcile them. The major Ritual was carried out in 2010 renewing the **Moru A Nayeche Pact** by Jie and Turukana.

Subsequently the Turukana instituted it as an Annual Turukana Cultural day where they re-commit to peaceful neighborliness. The Nayeche Pact has also brought on board other related tribes from Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda and Kenya. Raids stopped.

SIGNING OFF FROM THE COORDINATION CORNER

Mukondeleli Mpeiwa
Coordinator, Panel of the Wise/FemWise-Africa
Secretariat



In our stocktaking, there is of course the more sobering realization that so much more remains to be done, and should be done better as we continue demanding the due recognition and inclusion of our efforts in global and continental and national peace and security efforts as African women. While recognizing that the success of the WPS agenda will remain a shared responsibility that requires a “whole of society” approach, we should of course fully own the critical aspects that we as African women still need to deliver on for ourselves, together. One of the areas we have worked on a lot over the years is coordination, knowing that a united voice is a louder and stronger voice.

It has been twenty years of a globally recognized Women Peace and Security agenda!!! For twenty years women have been engaged in a recognized struggle to have a voice and be heard at the peace table. The fact that we have a newsletter, generated from the Continental authority on African peace and security matters, talking specifically to WPS issues, from our perspective, shows just how far African women have come on this journey. There is indeed so much to take stock of, celebrate and be thankful for.

Building on 1325 and its gains, as we look towards WPS 2.0, we need to strengthen our togetherness and focus on breaking down the barriers that divide us so that we become truly ‘unignorable’.

As we come together from our different countries, experiences, cultures, age groups and other socially constructed identities, we meet under the colorful continental umbrella. It is our common ‘Africanness’ that unites us, and I think we need to reflect a bit deeper on how our diversity can become our true strength. We also need to actively work on our unity, together. We must also be more

deliberate in how we leverage and strengthen our intergenerational partnerships and exchanges. For instance, as young women we should be prepared to transition into our roles as the custodians of Africa's cultures and customs, and the drivers of its necessary transformation into a more inclusive and participatory space. Our mothers equally must make a conscious effort to invite us into traditional spaces and entrust us with the knowledge and practices that make us who we are as African women.

Together we must enlarge the space and legitimize the voices and contributions of African women, young and old, in all decision-making platforms in our societies.

As one of the many "middle generation" women who have so much to learn and some experience to offer, my personal hope for the "future 1325" is a policy-and-practice space that recognizes, validates and acknowledges our contributions as African women. My dream is for a WPS Agenda that affirms African women as "enough", and as equals to our counterparts across the globe. They say that dreams do come true, with a bit of hard work I believe they almost certainly do! Let's raise our "doeks" and celebrate the achievements of Resolution 1325, and the future of women peacebuilders and mediators across the globe!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Mukondi". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the page.