

# Fact Sheet 05/2016

## Women in Peace Processes

# The Swedish Mediation Network for Women

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*The Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) has been commissioned to create a women mediation network, with the aim to increase the number of women in mediation and facilitation to end armed conflict, and to increase the number of women from conflict-affected countries involved in peace processes.*

### BACKGROUND

The important role of women as actors for peace has long been overlooked, despite the fact that women in both states and civil society have consistently contributed to peace and security. While mediation has gained prominence in the past 25 years, women mediators continue to be an underrepresented group. According to studies conducted on peace processes between 1992 and 2011, only around two percent of chief mediators were women (UN Women 2012).

There is growing international support to address this imbalance. Already the Beijing Platform of 1995 underlines that the role of women in mediation must be strengthened (paragraph 144 c). In 2000, Security Council Resolution 1325, the first thematic resolution on women, peace and security, also recognized the importance of women's participation. Resolution 1889 (2008) expresses it even more in detail, "stressing the need to ensure that women are appropriately appointed at decision-making levels, as high level mediators, and within the composition of the mediators' teams". When the UN General Assembly adopted its first resolution specifically dedicated to mediation in 2011, the same needs were repeated. It stresses the importance of the full and effective participation of women at all levels, at all stages and in all aspects of the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Despite the growing international attention, the role of women as mediators remains very limited 15 years after the adoption of resolution 1325. The underrepresentation of women at the negotiating table is more pronounced than in other public decision-making roles. The systematic exclusion of women from peace talks has implications for the degree to which the issues that concern them are treated (Global Study/UN Women 2015).

According to studies, there is a positive correlation between inclusive peace processes and the sustainability of peace agreements (Thania Paffenholz 2015). While recognizing that women are not a uniform group, the importance of women's and civil society's perspective on the conflict history, actors involved, violence dynamics and the conditions for sustainable peace is widely recognized. However, the time constraints many mediation processes are under, significantly increases the risk of women's and civil society's participation, and protection becomes more symbolic than a reality.

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## THE SWEDISH POLITICAL CONTEXT

In 2014, the Swedish government declared itself to be the first feminist government in the world and launched its feminist foreign policy. The policy aims to ensure women's rights and participation in central decision-making processes, including in peacebuilding efforts and peace negotiations. The Foreign Ministry Action Plan (2015-2018) sets the direction of the policy action to be taken by the Foreign Service.

As part of the government's broader feminist foreign policy, a network of women peace mediators has been created. The creation of a mediation network is one way to increase women's representation and active participation in peace and security efforts in practice. It should be seen as one component of several in Sweden's commitment to the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions. The government, its agencies and civil society organizations in Sweden work to increase the participation of women, through among others, the FBA, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (IKFF).

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## THE ASSIGNMENT GIVEN TO THE FOLKE BERNADOTTE ACADEMY

The assignment to create the network of women peace mediators has been given to the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), the Swedish government agency for peace, security and development. The Swedish network will be part of a Nordic women mediation network, coordinated by the FBA together with Nordic partner organizations.

The overall objective is to increase the number of women mediators and facilitators in peace processes – both in high-level processes and processes that take place in other tracks. Part of the task concerns the Swedish mediation capacity, and in a wider perspective the corresponding capacity among women in conflict-ridden countries.

It should be underlined that there is not a lack of competent women, but the preconditions have not been there. At an international high-level meeting in Stockholm in December 2015, the Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström presented the Swedish network as a tool to strengthen women's participation in peace processes. It will no longer be possible to argue that there is a lack of qualified women ready to assume mediation assignments. The networks will be important platforms for information exchange and experience sharing.

The network of women mediators established by the FBA will identify, create contact between and make mediators visible, as well as offer support to women in peace processes. Within two years, the network will contribute to an increased proportion of women as mediators in peace processes. The following strategies will be important to fulfil the objectives:

- Exchange and coordination, with e.g. relevant networks, actors and researchers within the field.
- Support to other national, regional or international networks and actors as well as to on-going peace processes.
- Profile and promote women in mediation and mediation practice.

Sweden's and the FBA's active commitment to support women's participation as mediators and negotiators is an important step in achieving equality in peace processes.