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GENDER INCLUSIVITY AND EFFECTIVE MEDIATION PROCESSES IN WEST AFRICA:

An Assessment Report and Action Plan

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GENDER inclusivity and effective mediation processes in West Africa: an assessment report and action plan

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ECOWAS Commission expresses appreciation to the European Union (EU) for the financial support to the assessment, analysis, and preparation of the report and action plan on Gender Inclusivity and Effective Mediation Processes in West Africa, and to the following:

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Foreword

The current report highlights the relevance of gender in mediated peace processes and outlines the ECOWAS policies and normative frameworks that provide justification and scope of such interventions. Using qualitative data sourced from desk review, interviews, and case studies, the report describes how women can and have influenced peace processes and urges ECOWAS to leverage these positive examples as the impetus to institutionalized gender-inclusive mediation at all tracks of the mediation processes in West Africa.

The existence of a defined structure for facilitating mediation, the availability of an ECOWAS Mediation Guidelines (EMG) and the ECOWAS Dialogue and Mediation Curriculum (ECOWAS DMC), the launch of the Network of Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation in West Africa (FemWise-West Africa), the recent reconstitution of the ECOWAS Council of the Wise (CoW), and the existence, strengthening and/or setting up of National Peace Infrastructures provide great opportunities and entry points for the ECOWAS Commission and all stakeholders to promote gender mainstreaming in ECOWAS peace and security mandate.

The report also lists key recommendations to foster gender inclusivity in mediation processes, to include: i) enhanced coordination and collaboration amongst the peace and security actors within the area of responsibility of ECOWAS, ii) building of networks and synergies between women's organization in the field of peace and security, iii) working towards a dedicated knowledge management framework within ECOWAS, including a mediation policy and strategy framework, iv) enhanced capacity building and training for women peace actors, and v) deliberate appointment of dedicated gender advisors on mediation teams, including appointing women as special envoys, mediators, and facilitators of peace processes.

At this junction, the ECOWAS Commission wishes to commend the European Union for their steadfast support to their baseline assessment and action plan on Gender and Mediation through the provision made available by the European Union support to ECOWAS regional Peace, Security and Stability mandate programme (ECOWAS-EU PSS Project).

We invite all stakeholders to use the report and action plan as a resource to further the goals of addressing the gaps, vulnerabilities, and windows of opportunities related to gender mainstreaming in ECOWAS mediation processes.

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Commissioner, Political Affairs, Peace and Security

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACCORD	African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes
AU	African Union
CMI	Crisis Management Initiative
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CoW	Council of the Wise
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DDRR	Demobilization, Disarmament, Reintegration & Rehabilitation
DPA	Directorate of Political Affairs
DPKRS	Directorate for Peacekeeping & Regional Security
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECPF	ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework
EWD	Early Warning Directorate
FAS	Femmes Africa Solidarity
FBA	Folke Bernadotte Academy
FemWise	Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GEDC	Gender Development Centre
GIZ	German Development Cooperation
GMT	Gender Management Team
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MACP	Mass Action Campaign for Peace
MARWOPNET	Mano River Women's Peace & Security Network
KAIPTC	Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre
MCRPAD	Mediation and Coordination of Regional Political Affairs Division
MFD	Mediation Facilitation Division
NRCCM	National Response & Coordination Centre Mechanism
PAPS	Political Affairs Peace and Security
RECs	Regional Economic Communities

REPSFECO	Réseau Paix & Sécurité des Femmes de l'espace CEDEAO
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SSR	Security Sector Reform
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
ToT	Training of Trainers
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNOWAS	United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USAID	United States of America International Development
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peace-building
WIPNET	Women in Peace-building Network
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

Executive Summary

With the advent of a more pronounced Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda throughout international organizations such as ECOWAS, United Nations, the African Union, or the European Union, including the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on gender mainstreaming, the promotion and inclusion of women in all areas of the conflict transformation spectrum has brought to fore the attention of women-led peace processes and the participation of women in peace negotiations, namely in a mediated peace processes. However, albeit with a strong presence of robust policies throughout the web of international organizations, women's participation in the peace process is limited, or the impact thereof remains unclear. This reality of limited engagement and participation is reflected in both research and practice.

As a norm-setting institution, ECOWAS has taken unprecedented steps in ensuring the inclusion of women and the mainstreaming of gender considerations in its mediated multi-track processes throughout the region. Both the ECOWAS Commission and the member states supported by proactive women's movements throughout the member states have taken measures to advance the role that women play at all levels of the multi-track mediation process. Dedicated frameworks, policy instruments, and a pronounced peace and security architecture establishes the parameters for ensuring that women's voices are being heard and that they count throughout the conflict transformation spectrum, from early warning to post-conflict development and reconstruction. In this context, it is key that women not only participate actively, but also influence and shape the very peace processes that will allow Freedom from Fear and Freedom from Want.

In order to get a better understanding of the state of the art of women's influence in mediated processes, ECOWAS Department of Gender and Social Affairs (which covers issues on Gender) and the Directorate of Political Affairs (DPA), through the Mediation Facilitation Division (MFD)[1], engaged in two concurrent set of activities: a research-based approach on women's influence in peace processes, with country scans and evaluation of the impact that policies have on gender mainstreaming, and a high-level expert workshop, examining and assessing

[1] Following the institutional reform that was embarked upon in 2017, the Mediation Facilitation Division (MFD) was merged with the Political Affairs and International Cooperation Division (PAICD) in 2019, both within the Directorate of Political Affairs, to become the Mediation and Coordination of Regional Political Affairs Division (MCRPAD).

gender mainstreaming through participatory interaction.

This assessment report attempts to explore the facets of women's participation in peace processes at the regional level and through the exchange of views on existing normative frameworks, the mainstreaming of gender within the regional peace and security arrangement of ECOWAS and its internal structures, as well as the juxtaposition of case studies from Guinea Bissau to Nigeria and beyond. Some of the key recommendations highlighted the need for;





1.0 **Introduction**

1.0 Introduction

In the past decades, the West African region has witnessed a host of security challenges that have somewhat hampered the sustainable development and regional integration agenda of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Faced with incessant coup d'états, civil wars, and political instability — especially in the late 1980s and early 1990s which threatened the stability of the region, ECOWAS successfully intervened in some Member states to restore peace and stability[2]. The recent cases are the governance challenges in Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, and Togo. While ECOWAS leadership in mediation interventions within the region is commendable, it was deemed necessary to create a dedicated structure within the Department of Political Affairs Peace & Security (PAPS) to backstop and guide its mediation interventions, leading to the establishment of Mediation Facilitation Division (MFD) within the Directorate of Political Affairs (DPA) in 2015. The broad mandate of the MFD includes: backstopping mediation and preventive diplomacy initiatives embarked upon by ECOWAS-designated Special Envoys, Mediators and Facilitators, Members of the Council of the Wise, and Permanent/Special/ Resident Representatives; carrying out research and conflict analyses for mediators prior to deployment; supporting and designing of mediation strategies; providing logistical support; managing knowledge and information; disseminating best practices and lessons learned; and capacity-building programs and seminars in mediation and preventive diplomacy for relevant institutions in the community, appropriate state institutions, civil society organizations and local peace constituencies within the Member States to undertake mediation, conciliation, and arbitration activities.

Successful ECOWAS interventions have been guided by sound normative frameworks as part of its wider Peace and Security Architecture[3]. In general, preventive diplomacy and mediation initiatives rely on normative frameworks that incorporate provisions on global norms such as gender considerations to ensure success. This sensibility is firmly incorporated into the ECOWAS peace and stability agenda, with the 1999 Protocol which states that '*ECOWAS shall recognize,*

2 ECOWAS successfully intervened in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Burkina Faso and recently the Gambia.

3 The primary frameworks include: The ECOWAS Revised Treaty (1993); Protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (1999); and the Sup plementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001).

encourage and support the role and participation of women in its initiatives for conflict prevention, management, resolution, security and peace support operations."[4] Yet, while ECOWAS has succeeded in developing policies on Women, Peace and Security, more needs to be achieved at the operational level. Indeed, women's participation in peace processes continue to be limited; the non-existence, so far, of ECOWAS women-led mediation or preventive diplomacy initiatives as well as the lapses in gender considerations in peace negotiations and agreements, are salient examples of existing gaps when it comes to women's influence in mediation.

However, it is important to note that ECOWAS remains at the forefront of the advancement of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, ahead of other Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Notwithstanding this accomplishment, ECOWAS could further improve its performance on gender mainstreaming in mediation.

This assessment process identifies the vulnerabilities and windows of opportunities related to gender mainstreaming in ECOWAS mediation processes. It identifies strategies to promote women's participation and leadership in peacemaking and lays out recommendations for the full integration of women into these important processes. The overall objective of this assessment is to strengthen the mainstreaming of gender considerations into ECOWAS conflict prevention and resolution efforts in the region, particularly in mediation. This assessment of the intersection between gender integration and mediation, as part of ECOWAS Conflict Prevention and Response Mechanism, is based on the recognition of the undeniable roles of women in peace processes, especially in mediation. Although women constitute a little over 50% of the population in West Africa, they disproportionately bear the brunt of violent conflicts and security challenges and experience gross discrimination and marginalization due to cultural and religious norms. Gender considerations remain, de facto, a marginal priority of the peace and security agenda of ECOWAS, as evidenced in gender representation across the organization's hierarchy and in the integration of gender sensitivity into its programmes.

Strategic Question:	To what extent have women influenced these [peace] processes and what should [ECOWAS] do differently to ensure gender mainstreaming in mediated processes?

[4] Art. 40 (4) of the 1999 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, 1999.

2.0 **Methodology**

2.0 Methodology

The assessment report combines two separate, yet interlinked activities: A research project, carried throughout 2018 and led by a consultant, and a two-day multi-stakeholder workshop, held in Abuja, Nigeria in October 2018.

For the research project, the qualitative data was sourced from document analysis and interviews – via telephone calls and in person. The collation of information began in April 2018 during the orientation meeting in Abuja. The consultant began the process with consultations with key stakeholders such as staff of the DPA, the Director of the Gender Directorate, the ECOWAS Gender and Development Centre, members of the newly established Women, Peace & Security Committee within the Department of PAPS, among others. Furthermore, the consultant held several telephone meetings with the focal person, to this assessment within the DPA, to discuss the status and progress of the assignment.

Five questionnaires were designed and distributed to fifteen (15) experts and stakeholders. Key questions highlighted in the questionnaires were based on the analyses of relevant documents. The general questionnaire was designed to assess gender mainstreaming in ECOWAS strategies, programming, and activities. The second questionnaire was sector-specific, thus designed to triangulate gender mainstreaming in ECOWAS mediation processes. Finally, three other short questionnaires were designed to evaluate challenges and opportunities for gender integration in mediation in the West African region.

Under the auspices of the Directorate of Political Affairs, the GIZ-funded workshop on gender inclusivity and effective mediation process in West Africa, held on 3rd – 4th October 2018 in Abuja, brought together ECOWAS Commission staff, policymakers, activists, and mediation experts to share experience, explore and provide recommendations on how to enhance, strengthen, and advance gender mainstreaming in mediation processes throughout ECOWAS's area of responsibility. The workshop focused on case studies from Guinea Bissau , Togo and an NGO's engagement in Northern Nigeria, as well as highlighting the role of the new Africa Women Mediator Platform, FemWise-Africa, and a scenario-building exercise on

the inclusion of gender in ECOWAS-led processes.

Both the research assessment and the workshop were limited in scale and scope to assess the inclusion of women in ECOWAS-led processes. To signal the relevance of gender mainstreaming, the assessment report focused on data gathered from three case studies, namely Guinea Bissau, Northern Nigeria, and Togo.

2.1 Defining Gender

"Gender refers to the socially constructed differences between men and women and the unequal power relationships that result."[5] Gender affects both an individual's identity and social relations.

Our personal identity,[6] the way we define ourselves, is normally greatly shaped by our gender. Our identity is also shaped by our biological body, but there is ample evidence that culturally constructed differences between men and women (in other words "gender") also greatly shape our identity. For example, in a given culture, there may be social expectations that men should be successful in their careers and women should learn housework in school to prepare them for motherhood. These expectations that will shape our identity as "the one who earns money" or "the one who looks after the house" are not determined by biological differences, but by gender. Our gender may be influenced – *but not determined* – by where one is in one's life cycle,[7] by one's family and cultural context, one's political and economic environment, and one's biology. There is an interaction between gender (cultural, political, economic, and psychological aspects) and sex (biological aspects) – yet this is indirect, and the nature of

[5] Women's Initiative for Gender Justice, Clarification of Term 'Gender'. www.iccwomen.org/resources/ gender.html accessed at 18. September 2015.

[6] "Gender is a person's inner identity as feminine or masculine as distinct from possessing a female or male body. Gender is historically con tingent and cannot be represented as somehow "transcendent" of the culture where its particular "style" is situated". Rowland, S. (2002) Jung: A Feminist Revision, Oxford, Malden: Blackwell Publishers, p. 176.

[7] Carol Gilligan shows how gender characteristics may change during the life cycle of an individual. In her North American culture, boys are expected to become independent and "tough" (the initiation often happens at about 5 years of age), and girls are expected to sacrifice themselves for relation- ships (the initiation often occurs during puberty). Thus, girls tend to start adult life with more "relat- edness" qualities, and tend to work on developing independence qualities, and boys start adult life with more independence qualities, and tend to work on developing relatedness qualities. Both men and women, when developed, show a high degree of balance between independent relatedness and related independence. Gilligan, C. (1982) In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: Harvard University Press.

the interaction is very much debated. [8]Gender thus may affect an individual's needs, perceptions, values, and behavior.

Gender affects *social relations*[9], which always involves questions of *power relations*. Gender may shape the relationships between men and women, and their role in society. In social conflict, this aspect is often at the forefront, in terms of how societies' gender role attribution leads to discrimination against one of the genders. Gender is culturally[10] shaped, which means that our individual gender identity and relations are shaped by the social group that we are part of. Thus, it changes over time and space.

Therefore, it does not make sense to speak about universal gender qualities. However, it does make sense to speak about gender qualities within a given social group and in a specific phase of history. Furthermore, even within the life history of an individual, the gender qualities affecting conflict behavior, negotiation, and mediation may change. This means it does not make sense to say: "women are more relationship- oriented, and men are more assertive and independent," but it does make sense to say: "in North America in the latter half of the 20th Century, women are more relationship-oriented, especially in the first half of their life. In the same context and period, men tend to be more assertive and independence oriented."[11] Furthermore, there is empirical evidence that the intra-gender differences can be greater than the inter-gender differences. For example, the difference between the negotiation and mediation styles of two individual men may be greater than that between the average man and the average woman.

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[8] Samuels, A. (1986) Jung and the Post-Jungians, London, and New York: Routledge.

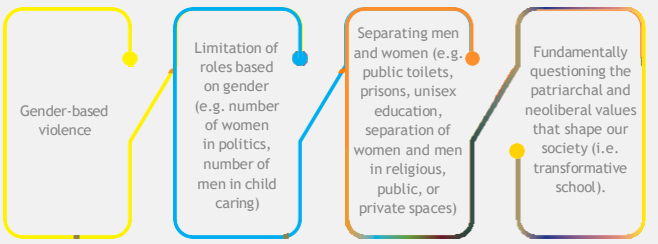
[9] "Gender should be defined as the social construction of social relations between 'women' and 'men.' Reimann, C. (2004), 'Gender in Problem-solving Workshops: A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing?' Swiss peace Working Paper, p. 7. www.swisspeace.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Media/Publications/WP3_2004.pdf

[10] Culture can be understood as "socially inherited, shared, and learned ways of living possessed by individuals by virtue of their membership in social groups." Avruch, K. (2002) Culture and Conflict Resolution, Washington D.C.: USIP Press, Chapter 14.

2.2 Locating gender and the WPS agenda

How do we situate gender in the WPS agenda? How does gender equality lead to a more sustainable peace? In answering these questions, it is important to go beyond gender analysis and look at the normative (gender equality) and its practical effectiveness.

Advocates of gender equality and feminism struggle against patriarchy (societies dominated by men). The argument is not that societies dominated by women would be fairer, but that equal opportunity for both women and men is likely to lead to fairer societies. An example of this type of thinking can be found in the "transformative feminist school" that questions both patriarchy and neoliberal macroeconomic structures[12]. There are at least four issues related to gender equality.



While there is a large consensus to avoid gender-based violence, the question of which roles men and women are allowed to take on is hotly debated in most societies.[13] What men and women can do together and what they cannot is also often culturally disputed – often with traditional or religious actors seeking a greater separation of the two. Fundamentally questioning patriarchal and neoliberal values of society may also be strongly debated – especially by those who benefit from the system.

Feminists, for example, those who "struggle for justice for women and the transformation of society"[14] and advocates of gender equality may refer to one or all of these dimensions – but the confusion of the dimensions can lead to

[12] Baksh, R. and Harcourt, W. (eds.) (2015) The Oxford handbook of transnational feminist movements, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
[13] Köppel, R. (2009) "Mütter", Weltwoche 29, www.weltwoche.ch/ausgaben/2009-29/artikel-2009-29-editorial-muette.html
[14] Description of Mary Grey about feminist theology, in Grey, M. (1999) "Feminist Theology: A Critical Theology of Liberation", in: Christopher Rowland (ed.) The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 89.

misunderstandings and conflict. Many advocates of specific gender roles and clearer separation of sexes, for example, do not feel as though they are endorsing gender-specific violence (they probably argue that they are minimizing it), while some feminists may feel that not allowing women into politics is a form of violence. In the same vein going beyond normative arguments, there are also pragmatic arguments of effectiveness. Efforts to increase the representation and meaningful participation of women in peace negotiations have witnessed the emergence of two approaches: 1) a normative approach largely based on rights; 2) a pragmatic approach largely based on a conflict transformation perspective. Historically, the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda emerged not only from the experiences of women in conflict, but also from interactions between women's rights activists, feminist interventions in security and conflict transformation, and the field of peace-building. Thus, the WPS agenda can include gender and rights-based normative overtones which guide the resulting advocacy and policies. In contrast, the pragmatic approach asserts that the increased participation of women results in more efficient and effective peace processes.

There is empirical support that peace processes that are more inclusive of women are more effective and sustainable. [15]Women not only have a right to participate in negotiations – but they also make up half of the constituencies that conflicting parties represent. This unique knowledge and experience can enrich the arguments of negotiators, resulting in an agreement that is more implementable and sustainable. It can also result in more support and participation from constituencies during the implementation phase of a peace process.[16] The evolution of the WPS in policy and practice has seen a trend towards the pragmatic approach, but much of it is still heavily based on the normative framework surrounding gender.

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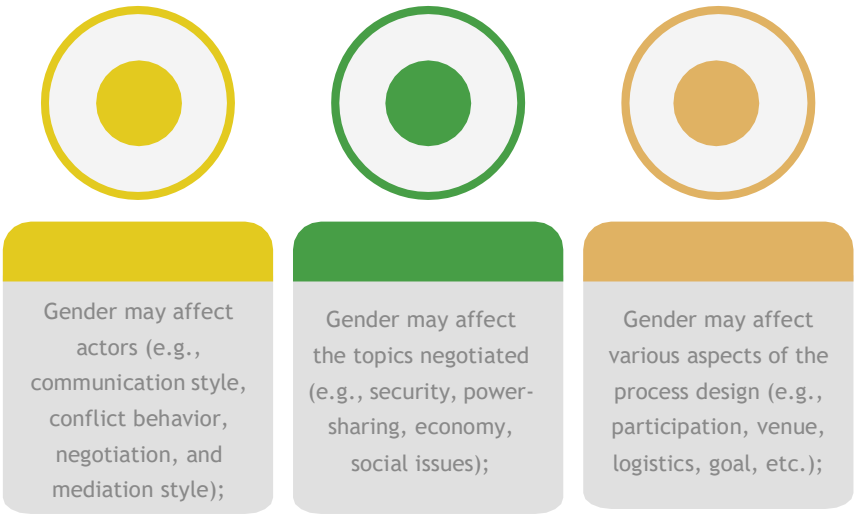
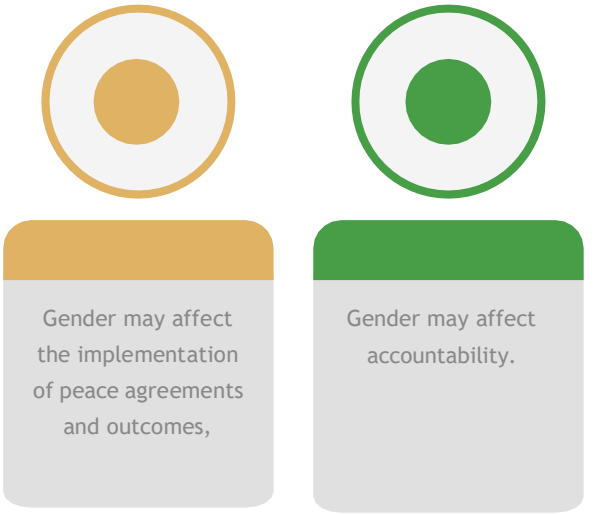
15. Nderitu, A. and O'Neill, J. (2013) Getting to the Point of Inclusion: Seven Myths Standing in the Way of Women Waging Peace. Washington, DC: The Institute for Inclusive Security and Paffenholz, T. (2015) Beyond the Normative: Can Women's Inclusion Really Make Better Peace Processes? Policy Brief, Geneva, Switzerland: The Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding.
16. Palmiano, J. (2014) Mediation Perspectives: Fighting 'Feminist Fatigue', http://isnblog.ethz.ch/conflict/ mediation-perspectives-fighting-feminist-fatigue

In a nutshell, the answer to why gender is important for mediation is because:





3.0 **Gender inclusivity in Policy Making**

3.0 Gender Inclusivity in Policy Making

3.1 International Policy Framework

The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security adopted in the year 2000 has become one of the most powerful advocacy tools in gender mainstreaming in peace and security issues. To many in the field of peace-building, this was a watershed resolution as it was one of the first to provide a range of measures specifically aimed at including women in the prevention, management, and resolution of violent conflict.[17]

Although it was a watershed resolution on women, peace, and security, the UNSCR 1325 was not the first influential framework on women, politics, and representation. Often referred to as an international bill of rights for women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly defined contours of discrimination against women and action points to combat it. [18]

In the last two decades, there has been an increase in the adoption of regional and international instruments that facilitate women's participation and inclusion in peace and security processes. The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which identified "women and armed conflict" as one of the twelve critical areas of concern. The Beijing Platform for Action called for increased participation of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution as well as the protection of women during armed conflict.[19] In 1998, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) produced a resolution calling on governments, international organizations, and civil society to proactively address the needs of women in conflict through their participation in peacekeeping, post-conflict reconstruction, conflict prevention, and disarmament.

In October 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted

[17] Bell, C. and O'Rourke, C. (2011) UN Security Council 1325 and Peace Negotiations and Agreements. Women at the Peace Table: Asia Pacific Opinion Series 4, Geneva, Switzerland: The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.
[18] Palmiano, J. (2014), Fighting 'Feminist Fatigue'?: Women and Peace Negotiations. Working Paper 2, Bern, Switzerland: swisspeace.
[19] See Article 141 of the Beijing Platform of Action.

Resolution 1325 which acknowledges the impact of armed conflict on women and girls while underscoring the gender dimensions of peace processes. UNSCR 1325 encourages women's participation in decision-making, peace-building, and peacekeeping missions of the United Nations by calling upon the Secretary-General (SG) of the United Nations (UN) to appoint women as Special Representatives and Special Envoys. It emphasizes the critical role of Member States in increasing women's participation in decision-making at all levels, supporting local women's peace initiatives, and providing suitable candidates as special representatives and envoys to the Secretary-General. UNSCR 1325 further calls on Member States to establish special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence and prosecute those responsible for sexual and other forms of violence against women and girls. The Resolution urges Member States to include a gender perspective in their peacekeeping, peace-building, demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration processes. [20]

Furthermore, the UN Security Council calls on Member States to implement UNSCR 1325 by developing National Action Plans (NAPs), review their Constitutions, and revise their electoral system. NAPs provide opportunities for countries to identify priorities, mobilize resources, and determine timeframes and indicators for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325. In addition, NAPs are expected to increase the synergy between disparate groups in society, including government actors, civil society, and development partners to build a common agenda towards women's empowerment and sustainable peace. Further commitment to women's full representation in mediation is also articulated in subsequent UN Security Council's Women Peace and Security agenda as stipulated in resolutions 1820, 1888, and 1889 as well as in the recently launched Global initiatives, Agenda 2030, and the concept of Sustaining Peace, which promote inclusivity as a central issue of global peace.

Thus, the international community has laid out policy frameworks to ensure women's full and effective representation in peace processes. As we mark the 20th anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325, we have an obligation to ensure the equal and effective participation of women in mediation processes and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

[20] Since the agenda was set with the core principles of Resolution 1325, three supporting resolutions have been subsequently adopted by the Security Council: 1820, 1888 and 1889. Resolution 1820(2008) was the first UNSCR to recognize conflict-related sexual violence as a matter of international ace and security. It calls for armed actors to stop using sexual violence against civilians as a weapon of war. UNSCR 1820 also urges parties in conflict to provide effective protection for civilians. Resolution 1888 focuses on strengthening leadership, expertise, and other institutional capacities within the United Nations and in member states to end conflict-related sexual violence

3.2 African Union Policy Framework

At the continental level, the African Union (AU) has taken clear steps to ensure gender inclusivity. The 2009 Gender Policy of the AU offers the primary framework for the institution's gender inclusivity agenda and builds on the 2004 Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa by African Heads of State and Government. The AU's Gender Policy "recognizes the equal status of women and men, girls and boys."[21] Consequently, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the AU has adopted the principle of 50/50 gender parity in the election of its commissioners.

This commitment is also reflected in the strategic agendas of the AU. During the launch of the "Make Peace Happen Campaign", the AU declared 2010 the Year of Peace and Security and committed 2010-2020 as the African Women's Decade. In 2014, the African Union appointed, for the first time, a Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security. Other programmatic initiatives include the commissioning of studies on the plight of women and children in conflict-affected zones. Given the importance of monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the WPS agenda to ensure delivery of commitments, the Continental Results Framework (CRF) was elaborated and adopted by the African Union Commission (AUC) to facilitate and accelerate implementation by the AU Member States.

Since 2009, the AU has further moved to professionalize its mediation practice through the establishment of a thematic unit, providing mediation training to staff and direct partners, such as insider mediators. In 2017 the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government established the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa) to systematize the inclusion of women in AU mediation strategies, processes as well as actions on the ground. The network was also designed to promote mediation actions to be undertaken directly by women with the support of the AU, train the next generation of women mediators, and strengthen the networking of women who aspire to become mediators by linking them with those who practice in this field at various levels.

[21] African Union, 2009. African Union Gender Policy, p. 10.

4.0 **Gender inclusivity in ECOWAS**

4.0 Gender Inclusivity in ECOWAS

4.1 Operationalizing Gender in ECOWAS institutional structures and processes

On 17 September 2010, ECOWAS adopted a Plan of Action (2010-2015)[22] for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820. The Plan of Action aims to foster synergies among different actors through the establishment of a strategic framework and a Regional Action Plan to support existing National Action Plans. Accordingly, the ECOWAS Plan of Action provides concrete measures to ensure the effective implementation of resolution 1325 in each country. These include the designation of national and regional focal points in the various institutions, as well as the publication of periodic reports and regular coordination meetings.

Overall, the declaration has four pillars: (1) effective participation of women in peace processes, (2) protection of women and girls from conflict-related sexual violence (3) prevention through greater involvement of women in preventive diplomacy and the establishment of early warning systems, (4) relief and recovery through access to adequate care and humanitarian services. It also provides for the establishment of monitoring mechanisms and evaluation instruments, including specific indicators.

Prior to the adoption of the aforementioned ECOWAS Plan of Action (2010-2015), in 2008, ECOWAS developed and adopted its Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF). The framework aims to mainstream conflict prevention into ECOWAS' policies and programs and to strengthen regional capacities and tools for preventing violent conflicts. It includes a specific component on Women, Peace, and Security, a demonstration of ECOWAS's commitment to defining security from the perspective of the needs of the people of the region. In this regard, the ECPF component on women peace and security, which is ECOWAS most extensive effort to date, makes direct reference to UNSCR 1325 while harnessing the relevant provisions within extant ECOWAS instruments. Further, the development of the Action

[22] There is an updated Action Plan of the Women, Peace and Security Component of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (2015-2020).

Plan of the Women, Peace, and Security component of the ECPF is a major achievement and reflects ECOWAS' strong commitment to engendering the Peace and Security agenda in West Africa. To support the implementation of the ECPF, the Commission set up an Internal Steering Committee in which the Gender Directorate is an active member, and it formulated a 2012-2017 Women, Peace, and Security Action Plan as well as prepared a 3-Year Priority Plan for the Implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security component of the ECPF. In addition, in September 2010, ECOWAS Ministers at a regional forum adopted a Regional Action Plan on the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace, and Security.

Consequently, one could rightly state that ECOWAS has a Strategic and Operational framework and normative instruments for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, and some noteworthy accomplishments display as to how the continuous integration of gender norms are being absorbed by the institution:



Establishment of the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre (EGDC) in 2003 as a specialised Agency charged with the responsibility to initiate and to facilitate capacity building through knowledge-based training and transfer of skills, programme development and management for women and men in the public and private sectors to address gender equality in ECOWAS integration programmes.



Establishment of the Gender Directorate to formulate gender policies and strategies and ensure gender mainstreaming in ECOWAS integration policies, strategies, and programmes.[23]



Establishment of several other promising conflict prevention organs to underpin its mandate, including the Early Warning System, the Mediation and Security Council, Offices of Permanent Representatives in Member states, the Council of the Wise (CoW) and Special Envoys.

[23] The Gender Directorate, formerly at the HQ has now been relocated and merged with the Gender Centre, Dakar.



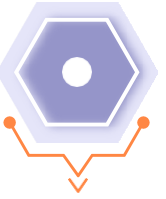
Setting up of the Network on Peace and Security for Women in the ECOWAS Region (NOPSWECO) in July 2009 as a regional civil society platform with the mandate to coordinate and optimize women's roles and initiatives in conflict prevention, peace-building, security, post-conflict reconstruction and the promotion of human rights, particularly of vulnerable groups, to ensure sustainable peace in the ECOWAS region.



The ECOWAS Gender Development Centre in Dakar in collaboration with the Women, Peace and Security Network (WIPSEN-Africa), the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), and GIZ developed a Training Manual on Gender, Peace and Security.



All ECOWAS Member states (except Cape Verde, Benin, and Niger) have National Action Plans for UNSCR 1325 and are at various stages of implementation with varying degree of success.



The establishment in 2017 of the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) Women, Peace, and Security Advisory Committee and the subsequent development and launch of a Guidelines on Women, Peace and Security to guide a continuous process of gender mainstreaming within the Department's programmes, activities, and initiatives.



The ECOWAS Gender Development Centre participates actively in the activities of the Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security in West Africa, which is coordinated by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). The Working Group has the overall objective of facilitating a shared and coordinated approach in the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in the ECOWAS region by ensuring better protection of the rights of women in conflict and post-conflict zones as well as their full and effective participation in all peace and security processes in the region.



The development of an ECOWAS Mediation Guidelines in 2018. For instance, Principle 8 of the guidelines is gender sensitivity and engendered mediation which emphasizes ECOWAS commitment to creating more opportunities for women to be involved in Tracks 1, 2, and 3 mediation and to mainstream gender in all preventive diplomacy and mediation interventions. It equally emphasizes the development of a gender sensitivity and mainstreaming strategy in mediation selection, processes, and outcomes, including a focus on skills development. [24]



The launch of the West African Network of Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation, FemWise-West Africa on 5–6 November 2019, in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire.

Despite the afore-mentioned noteworthy and non-exclusive enumeration of accomplishments, the challenges of a clear engagement of women in mediation processes remain a constant lacuna. One can conclude that while there are strong normative frameworks, there remains a rather haphazard, ad-hoc approach, in dealing with women's involvement in peace processes. Consequently, more needs to be done by internal ECOWAS stakeholders to promote, strengthen, and to better coordinate gender mainstreaming into its policies and processes.

4.2 Gender in Mediation

Currently, the use of gender considerations in the mediation process falls below stakeholders' expectations. Whilst there is a lot of evidence of grassroots-driven mediation in many of the various ECOWAS countries including the proliferation of local and regional networks, gender mainstreaming, and women's inclusion in mediation processes remains rather ad-hoc than systematic and institutionalized, albeit the existing normative frameworks. Workshop participants acknowledged the many supporting roles played by women in mediation and pointed out the importance of women's inclusion

[24] ECOWAS (2018) ECOWAS Mediation Guidelines, p. 54.

and the relevance of gender mainstreaming in peacemaking and peace-building processes.

Mediation is a term that covers a range of instruments used to deal with intra- and inter-state conflicts. It includes the mediation process itself, the provision of mediation support, and mediation-based dialogue processes. Such mediation and dialogue processes can be actively supported by third parties with the relevant mandates and guided by existing mediation frameworks.

In terms of mediation guidance, two frameworks define current international mediation:

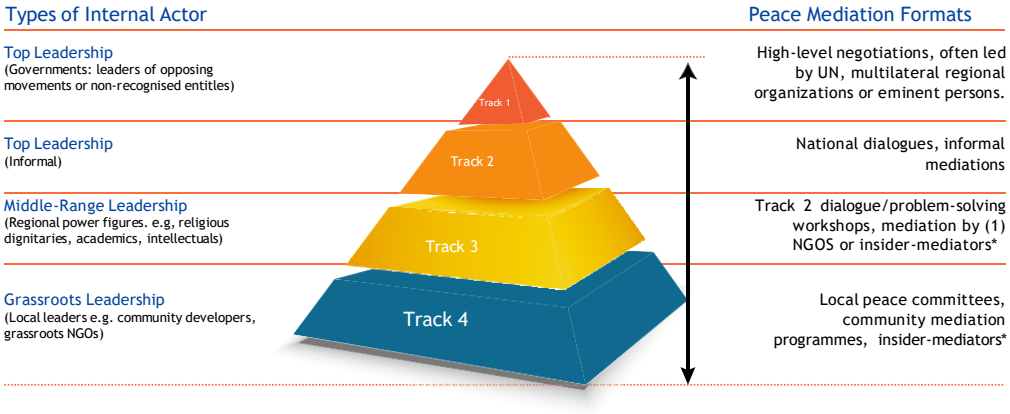
01 *The United Nations (UN) Guidance for Effective Mediation describes mediation as a voluntary process "whereby a third party assists two or more parties, with their consent, to prevent, manage or resolve a conflict by helping them to develop mutually acceptable agreements".[25] The term peace mediation comprises the entire structured process of supporting negotiations, from the initial contact between mediators and conflict parties to ceasefire negotiations and the implementation of peace agreements. Mediation is thus an instrument that can be used throughout the whole conflict cycle.*

02 *In the ECOWAS Dialogue and Mediation Curriculum (ECOWAS DMC) [26], mediation is defined as assisted negotiation in which an external actor enters the peacemaking process to influence and alter the character of previous relations between conflicting parties. Mediation, in the context of political mediation, is linked to three other types of informal interventions: conciliation, good offices, and fact-finding. Conciliation involves a trusted third party providing an informal communication link between the antagonists for the purpose of identifying the major issues, lowering tension, and encouraging the concerned parties to move toward direct interaction, such as negotiation, to deal with their differences. Related forms of limited third-party intervention include good offices, where the intermediary acts simply as a go-between, and fact-finding, where a third party assesses the situation and provides a statement back to the parties. In practice, all these methods overlap with mediation.*

[25] United Nations (2012). Guidance for Effective Mediation, p. 4.

[26] ECOWAS (2018) Dialogue and Mediation Curriculum – Handbook, p. 10.

Peace processes take place at different societal levels (tracks) and are often supported by external third parties:



The first level (Track 1) comprises the leadership of a country (e. g. political and/or military). The second level (Track 2) covers leading figures in society such as religious dignitaries, intellectuals, political parties, and regional power figures. Track 3 comprises leading civil society figures at the local level and grassroots initiatives. Work on the ground highlighted the need to expand this three-level structure to include a further component: The Track 1.5 level, which refers to top-level political decision-makers, yet in informal, non-official settings. These Track 1.5 mediation/dialogue processes often serve to sort out and prepare for Track 1 talks, develop options, and help bring about better comprehension and understanding between conflict parties. The potential offered by peace mediation can only be fully unlocked through coordinated interaction between these tracks. A lasting peace process thus often requires a multi-track approach, which does not only mean conducting activities on all tracks but also interlinking these activities in ways that increase their effectiveness.

The facilitation of dialogues through third parties is subsumed under the term “peace mediation” because it has a vast overlap with mediation, particularly the facilitative style of mediation. While mediation attempts to reach substantial agreements that solve issues at the heart of a conflict, the primary aim of the dialogue is to learn more and understand better the views

and needs of the opponent and thereby transform the relationship, create trust, and in many cases lay the ground for substantive agreements at a later stage. Dialogues on track 1.5, track 2 or 3 are often initiated to explore readiness for official negotiations, when formal peace talks are stalled, to broaden public participation and support for existing official peace processes, or to secure sustainable implementation of peace agreements. They are thus an essential component of an effective multi-track approach. Dialogues are usually facilitated by a third party whose role, methods, and skills are very similar to those of a facilitative mediator: Dialogue facilitators help the stakeholders involved to communicate their positions and interests, to de-escalate contentious topics by phrasing them differently and foster mutual understanding. [27]

While women are still very few in Track 1 level negotiations, they do represent ample voices in Track II and Track III. Broadening women's participation may yield positive results in the implementation of a negotiated and mediated agreement, which is also largely supported by research in the field. Research finding indicates the poor representation of women at the Track I level, a lack of tailored capacity-building initiatives to guarantee women either in the mediation team or the delegations of a mediator and a lack of a coordinated mediation strategy and policy. There seems to also be an overarching lack of linkages and synergies between the way ECOWAS approaches the gender mainstreaming at the policy level and at the operational level, i.e., translating policy into practical and operational programing and interventions that systematically target the inclusion of the women in mediation processes.

4.3 ECOWAS Policy Framework

As pointed out by Dr. Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe, there has been some significant number of efforts at the policy level to mainstream women's role in peace processes. As a norm-setting institution, ECOWAS has developed and adopted a robust normative framework on gender, peace, and security.

Seven key policies provide a normative framework for the intersection between mediation and the gender mainstreaming agenda of the ECOWAS. These instruments include: the 1999 ECOWAS Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management ,Resolution ,Peacekeeping

[27] Berghof Foundation (2012) Berghof Glossary on Conflict Transformation. Berlin: Bergh of Foundation, pp. 28 f.

and Security, the 2001 ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance; the Supplementary Act Relating to Equality of Rights Between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS Region (2015); the ECOWAS Gender Policy (2005); the 2008 ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF); the 2016 Statute of the ECOWAS Council of the Wise, and the 2018 ECOWAS Mediation Guidelines.

Additional Resources of ECOWAS Include:

- Article 63 of the ECOWAS Revised Treaty (1993) on Women and Development stipulates the formulation, harmonization, coordination, and the establishment of appropriate policies and programmes for enhancing the economic, social, and cultural conditions of women, as outlined in the ECOWAS Gender Policy and Strategic Framework for Action, approved in 2005.
- Women, Peace, and Security Action Plan of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) 2017-2020 validated by Experts and adopted by the ECOWAS Ministers of Gender and Women Affairs at the meeting held from 7th to 10th February 2017 in Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire and subsequently adopted by the 51st Ordinary Session of Council of Ministers in June 2017 in Monrovia, Liberia.
- ECOWAS Gender and Elections Strategic Framework and Action Plan (2017-2022) validated by Experts and adopted by the ECOWAS Ministers of Gender and Women Affairs at the meeting held from 7th to 10th February 2017 in Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire and subsequently adopted by the 51st Ordinary Session of Council of Ministers in June 2017 in Monrovia, Liberia.
- ECOWAS Manual on Integrating Gender into Early Warning and Early Response Developed, 2018.
- ECPF Action Plan: Women, Peace, and Security (2018-2020).

Developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the ECOWAS Gender Policy calls for gender considerations and equality in all ECOWAS protocols, declarations, and agreements. The Humanitarian and Social Affairs Directorate of the ECOWAS,

based in Abuja, Nigeria, and the Gender and Development Centre in Dakar, Senegal, are tasked with knowledge productions on gender mainstreaming at national levels. The ECOWAS Gender Development Centre has managed to mobilize women, civil society, and the private sector from West Africa to participate in regional peace processes. Moreover, the ECPF emphasizes the important role that women should play in peace and security in the West African region. Under the "Women, Peace and Security" component, the ECOWAS Commission aims to "propel and consolidate women's role and contribution to centre stage in the design, elaboration, implementation, and evaluation of conflict prevention, resolution, peace-building and humanitarian initiatives while strengthening regional and national mechanisms for the protection and advancement of women".[28]

The ECPF spells out programs, activities, outputs, and benchmarks for the operationalization of the women, peace, and security component.
Notably:

SECTION 81 WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY[29]
This component aims to facilitate the realization of the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 1325; the relevant provisions of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty, in particular Article 63; the relevant provisions of the Mechanism; and the provisions of Articles 40-43 of the supplementary protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. The objectives of the Women, peace and security component of ECPF shall be to propel and consolidate women's role and contribution to centre stage in the design, elaboration, implementation and evaluation of conflict prevention, resolution, peace-building, and humanitarian initiatives while strengthening regional and national mechanism for the protection, and advancement of women.

Section 82 of the same document outlines the various activities to enhance the role and visibility and impact of women in peace and security[30], notably in relation with the mediation processes:

ECOWAS shall take practical steps to increase the number of women in senior decision-making positions on peace and security matters within the commission and other ECOWAS institution, and Member States shall also take practical steps to increase the number of women in senior positions on peace and security matters within Government institutions at all levels.

[28] ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (2008) Regulation MSC/REG.1/01/08, P54

[29] Ibid, p. 54

[30] At the time of the writing of the workshop report, another commissioned report is covering the activities outlined in Section 82 a.)

SECTION 51(F) PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY[31]

Capacity-building workshops and seminars on Mediation and alternative dispute resolution for local peace constituencies, particularly traditional rulers, religious leaders, women groups, youth groups, and other civil society organisations.

The Mediation Facilitation Division (MFD)[32], through which the ECOWAS institutionalized mediation structure within the ECOWAS system, derives its mandate from the preventive diplomacy component of the ECPF and Articles 8 and 9 of the 2010 Monrovia Declaration.[33]

Principle 8 of the ECOWAS Mediation Guidelines on, ''gender sensitivity and engendered mediation'' emphasizes ECOWAS's commitment to creating opportunities for women to be involved in tracks 1, 2, and 3 mediation and to mainstream gender in all its preventive diplomacy and mediation interventions. Article 2(5) of the Statute of the Council of the Wise calls for at least 30% of women representation in its composition.

The 2001 ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance[34] references the following:

SECTION VIII: WOMEN, CHILDREN AND THE YOUTH[35]

ARTICLE 40:

Member states agree that the development and promotion of the welfare of women are essential factors for development, progress, and peace in the society. Consequently, they undertake to eliminate all forms of discrimination and harmful and degrading practices against women.

ARTICLE 43:

The Executive Secretariat (the Commission) shall put in place all necessary structures within its establishment to ensure the effective implementation of common policies and programmes relating to the education and the promotion of women and youth.

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[31] Ibid, p. 27

[32] Now Mediation and Coordination of Regional Political Affairs Division (MCRPAD).

[33] Odigie, B. 2016. The Institutionalization of Mediation Support within the ECOWAS Commission. (ACCORD), Policy and Practice Brief, 042, Durban: South Africa pp. 4-5.

[34] http://www.internationaldemocracywatch.org/attachments/350_ECOWAS%20Protocol%20on%20Democracy%20and%20Good%20Governance.pdf [accessed Oct. 26th, 2018]

[35] Ibid, p. 21

In this context, ECOWAS has given the mandate to the Executive Secretariat to implement the provisions aimed at the centrality of women in peace processes.

Other related documentation, emphasizing aspects of gender mainstreaming are:

- ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and light weapons (2006)
- The 2015 Supplementary Act on equality of rights between women and men for sustainable development in ECOWAS region[36]

Noteworthy is Art. 12 of the 2015 Supplementary Act delineating the concept of gender parity[37]:

ARTICLE 12:

1. *Member States shall adopt legislative measures and other strategies to ensure equal participation of women and men in all electoral processes, including the administration of elections and voting.*

2. *Member States shall ensure equal participation of women and men in the appointment of political representatives and decision-making through the adoption of laws and implementation of policies, strategies, and programmes aimed at:*

   (a) Strengthening women's capacity to participate effectively through training, leadership mentoring, and awareness creation on gender issues.
   (b) Strengthening the capacity of young people through training, leadership mentoring, and civic engagement.
   (c) Setting up structures to improve gender mainstreaming in civic education.

The aforementioned provisions are central in anchoring gender mainstreamed decision-making at the highest governmental level in Member States, allowing for equal representation and equity of voices and making sure that more women voices are represented in Track I mediation processes. These then provide a workable framework upon which the ECOWAS's gender and mediation agenda converge.

[36] http://www.ccdg.ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/Supplementary-Act-on-Gender-Equality.pdf [accessed Oct. 23rd, 2018]
[37] http://www.ccdg.ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/Supplementary-Act-on-Gender-Equality.pdf [accessed Dec. 9th, 2018]

5.0 Case Studies

5.0 Case Studies

5.1 Guinea Bissau

The case study on Guinea Bissau took place during the workshop held in October 2018 in Abuja, Nigeria.

To start the exploration, the Political Adviser to the ECOWAS Special Representative to Guinea Bissau presented on the socio-political dimensions of the crisis in Guinea Bissau, with the coup d'état in 2012 and the political stalemate of 2015. Guinea Bissau requested ECOWAS to mediate for the sake of the stability of the country. In October 2016, the Conakry Agreement established a road-map for the reform of the country, including institutional and electoral reforms, and more specifically the consensus-based designation of a prime minister and a more inclusive government. Moreover, the 15 dissenting members of the major political party *Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (PAIGC)* have put their demands forward regarding timeline and process. After one year of institutional void and instability, an extraordinary summit took place in Lomé on April 14, 2018. Through the mediated engagement, there was an agreement on the appointment of the prime minister, as well as an understanding of the postponement of parliamentary elections. Mr. Aristide Gomes was named Prime Minister and spearheaded the government that ensured the conduct of the legislative elections, which held on 10 March 2019, after it was postponed from the originally scheduled date of 18th November 2018.

The presentation provided a sound backdrop for the inputs made by a representative of the Women's Group in Guinea Bissau. Her account laid out the various strategies and mechanisms for Track III women to become involved and to influence Track I negotiations and outcomes. Especially considering reviving the Lomé Talks, the women were highly involved in the facilitation of the dialogue. The moment was ripe for their participation, especially due to a 2-year of political deadlock and institutional crisis. As a result of their scope and facilitative approach, women were able to consult not only with the President of Guinea Bissau but also to communicate and coordinate with the international stakeholders. The modalities of participatory action,

consultation, and observer status included: The building up of solidarity among women CSOs, women from political parties, and women from rural areas, all coming together through an apolitical and impartial approach to the resolution of the conflict. Though the women were at risk of being manipulated, they were able to increase their degree of legitimacy and credibility and the Council of Women acted as a third-party dialogue facilitator among those political groups and agents who could not be seen in direct contact with one another.

The Council of Women thrived toward the establishment of a National Stability Pact, based on the principles of inclusion (incl. the President, the Prime Minister, all political parties, and financial and technical partners). Having included more than 70 women from all walks of Guinea Bissau's socio-political spectrum, women consistently called for the promotion of peace and social cohesion, channeling all voices in an equal and equitable manner. The challenges remain in the effective coordination of Track I and Track III interactions. While there was a large involvement and effective participation at the national level, the international level remains largely limited to the sphere of elites, leaving no space or room for channels of communication between the Council of Women and international mediation processes. Overall, CSOs were neither consulted nor did they become a part of the ECOWAS mediation process.

The Gender Adviser of UNIOGBIS equally presented her talking points on how UNIOGBIS is strengthening gender mainstreaming in the context of peace and security in Guinea Bissau. Due to its normative commitments, UN agencies, and especially peacekeeping operations are very sensitive and aware of the issue of women inclusion and gender mainstreaming in mediated processes. UNIOGBIS Leveraged on the UN Peace-building Fund (PBF) for a project called *"Political Dialogue and National Reconciliation,"* funded for little less than a million dollars and well designed to engage the civil society in all its components and functions. At the same time, Civil Society was 'taking off' on its own, with many parallel initiatives that were growing also from within the region (Institut Gorée, RESFECO, the women and youth platforms who were invited in the ECOWAS-supported training on Electoral Violence Prevention; the Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace, and Security in West Africa and the Sahel). The

success of the Facilitation of Dialogue in particular, during 2017, relied on the credibility of the group of women and the fact that key interlocutors felt comfortable meeting with them in a confidential setting, as they trusted their personal Integrity, and did not feel threatened.

Some recommendations from the presentations included the call to generate lessons learned and best practices in peace processes, establish a checklist on gender mainstreaming to be included in Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and the proper debrief and evaluation of women's contribution to peace processes and mediation.

5.2 Northern Nigeria

The case study on women involvement in peace processes in Northern Nigeria was shared during the workshop held in October 2018 in Abuja, Nigeria.

Hamsatu Allamin, a member of the AU-FemWise Africa and founder and Executive Director of the Allamin Foundation presented aspects of her work while being involved in fact-finding, documentation, and the galvanizing of local communities and mothers of Boko Haram fighters to prevent conflict and stem the violence. She highlighted the practical efforts at conflict prevention by exploring with participants the very first interventions that took place under the umbrella of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the creation of Alternative Voices for non-ideological members of Boko Haram. The alarming degeneration of the humanitarian situation led to the furtherance of social networks that also included victims of sexual violence, networks of survivors, wives, and mothers, and the capturing of narratives and testimonies of victims, survivors, and perpetrators. The challenges to bringing about alternative ways to the raging conflict are daunting. Some of these challenges relates to the ongoing violent conflict, the inadequacy of skills, conflict resolution capacity, resources, and fear and apathy from aggrieved parties as well as a culture of silence.

Some of her recommendations centres on profiling and targeting of sources of funding for Boko Haram, encouragement of Nigeria and its neighbors to embrace dialogue as an alternative pathway to conflict management, and a comprehensive mapping of all the vulnerable groups of the insurgency (incl. widows, orphans, women fighters, etc.) as these

actors continue to be marginalized and stigmatized with the most likely scenario of bringing about more violence and a recurring conflict.

5.3 Togo

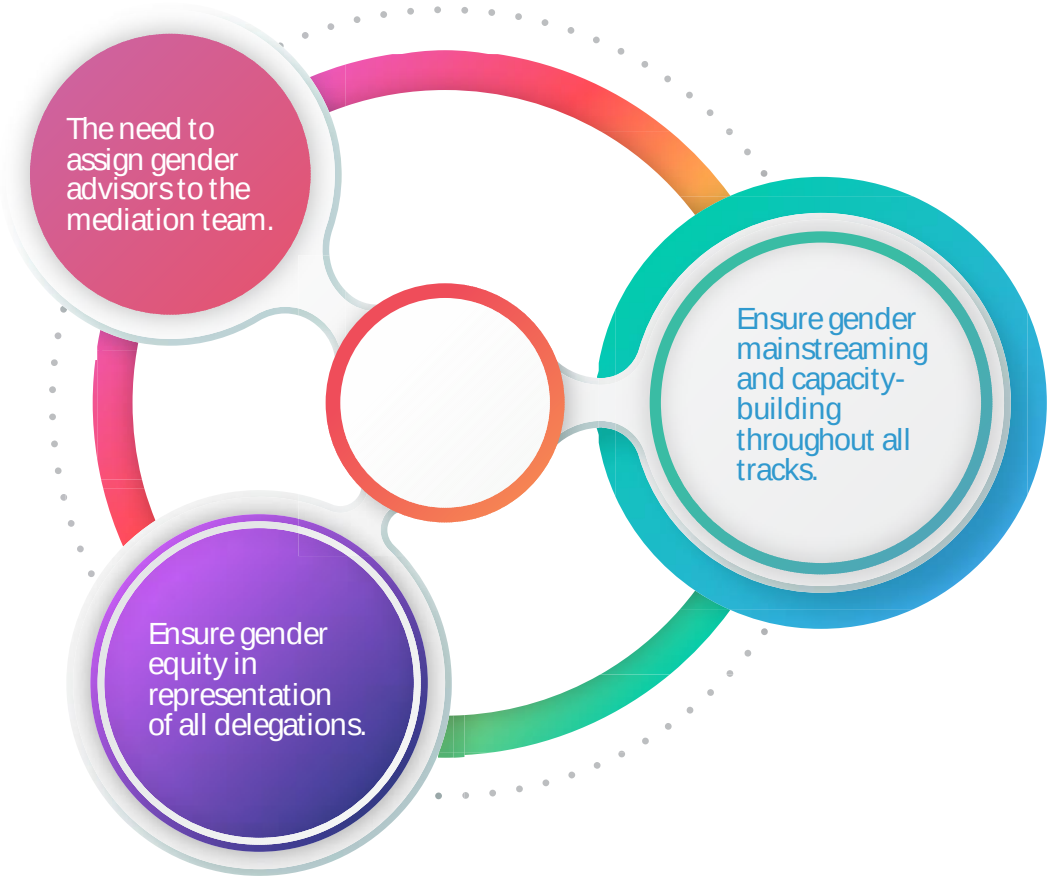
The case study on Togo was extracted from structured interviews, desktop research, and triangulation with open-source data.

Togo experimented with power-sharing more than a decade ago, with mixed results. After a bloody election that left 500 dead, the Accord Politique Global (APG-Comprehensive Political Accord) was signed in 2006 and effectively came to an end in 2010. The power-sharing agreement included a broad array of reforms. In addition to a government of national unity (which the main opposition party boycotted) headed by a moderate opposition figure, the APG called for transparent legislative elections and an overhauled electoral commission, as well as other constitutional and security reforms. Largely due to the ruling party's resistance and in-fighting among the opposition parties, the APG did not live up to expectations. A host of APG reforms went unimplemented including constitutional reforms and the question of presidential term limits — an enduring issue that triggered protests in the recent past.

A few protests were staged in Togo by opposition parties calling for the country to return to the 1992 constitution which imposes Presidential term limits. Faure Gnassingbe has been in power since 2005 after the death of his father, General Gnassingbe Eyadema, who was Togo's President from 1967 to 2005. The anti-Gnassingbe protests that began in August 2017 saw hundreds of thousands of people take to the streets across the country, resulting in some deaths and numerous injuries. The demonstrations were started by the main opposition PNP and CAP 2015, a coalition of five smaller opposition parties before expanding to 14 parties, demanding the resignation of Faure Gnassingbe "the cessation of the current electoral process," and "institutional reforms", as well as "the fulfillment of the rest of the appeasement measures", as part of the political dialogue. The Togolese government responded by imposing a ban on the planned protests.

ECOWAS eventual intervention and influence on the process paved the way for an agreed roadmap leading to the conduct of the postponed legislative elections on 20th December 2018,

and the eventual promulgation of an amended constitution incorporating tenure limit of the president and members of parliament, among other key institutional reforms. Whereas women have been drivers of protest and conflict prevention at the grass-roots level, some accounts seem to suggest that at least the 14 opposition parties featured women among the negotiating delegations. Like the case study on Guinea Bissau, there was no visible systematic gender consideration in the ECOWAS lead mediation process. Therefore, similar lessons learned from the case on Guinea Bissau applies to the Togo case, in particular:



6.0 Best practices and challenges

6.0 Best Practices and Challenges

Due to the ad-hoc nature of gender inclusion and participation in ECOWAS mediated processes, the task of identifying best practices was not completed during the life cycle of the assessment report. On a general note, the ECOWAS' 2015 Supplementary Act on Gender Equality, the only gender-specific legal framework in the ECOWAS, is also a laudable leap for the organisation. The Act emerged, in part, due to the "ineffectiveness of women's rights in spite of the existence of legal instruments" in the region.[38] The Act lays out a robust framework to protect the social and economic rights of women in West Africa.

Reports on gender mainstreaming in mediation in Africa and even worldwide are few.[39] Yet, the continent has recorded successes that highlight some of the advantages that women bring to these peace processes, especially those supported by formal mediation arrangements. In the mediation process that followed the 2007 post-election violence in Kenya, the African Union mediation panel comprised of an impressive gender mix. The two leading mediators were Kofi Annan and Graça Machel, who roused the participation of women in a process that already had women's movements at the grassroots level.

The challenges of gender main-streaming in mediation stem from the weaknesses of the gender mainstreaming agenda of the ECOWAS, as it does not have an extensive gender inclusion strategy. Rather, gender mainstreaming is left at the discretion of individuals within the institution. This assessment recognizes that this important gap exists at the policy level of the ECOWAS.

Regarding Track I mediation, the fundamental challenge about women's involvement is grounded in the ECOWAS Architecture for Peace and Security. The ECOWAS normative framework for gender inclusion, notwithstanding, the highest decision-making, approval, or delegation of authority for any mediation effort is with the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government. Participation in mediation at this level, therefore, is based on, their power and status and not on their sex. In all the protracted

[38] ECOWAS, 2015. Supplementary Act Relating to Equality of Rights between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS Region, p. 6.

[39] A study of 31 major peace processes between 1992 and 2011 reveals that only 4 percent of signatories, 2.4 per cent of chief mediators, 3.7 percent of witnesses and 9 percent of negotiators are/were women. United Nations Women. 2012. Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence. Available from: www.peacemaker.un.org.

conflicts that have ravaged some West African countries with the real potential of cross-border and region-wide security threats, the decisions to engage in Track I mediation in these conflicts have been undertaken solely at the highest level of the Authority of Heads of State and Government. These decisions always and overwhelmingly designated a sitting President. This was the case in Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, The Gambia and recently in Togo.

Given the limited access that women have to these high-level political offices in member states, this provision effectively closes out the space for women at the highest level of decision-making in the ECOWAS, thus, leaving very little room for gender inclusivity. Decisions to set up a Track I mediation team, and to appoint members of the team are, therefore, almost exclusively in the hands of men. For fourteen years when President Ellen John Sirleaf led Liberia, such decisions had at least one woman. With the recent peaceful transition in early 2018 to President George Weah, all fifteen (15) Heads of State are again men[40].

In general, the following challenges were noted during the assessment period:

- Limited access of women to high-level mediation spaces. This holds true for membership of Track I mediation processes and for the decision-making process that appoints high-level mediators as well.

- Few trained men and women with expertise in gender mainstreaming. More specifically, there are few trained women mediators and negotiators to ensure balance in the appointment of mediators. Training is often conducted in an ad-hoc manner with no overriding strategy that will ensure that the women who received such training will eventually be appointed as mediators, facilitators, special envoys, or Special and Permanent Representatives.

- Cultural nuances and inhibitions especially as it relates to patriarchal set up of the region. Restrictions and gender expectations prevent women's full participation in mediation because the process is not often gender-friendly or sensitive. For example, late-night decision-making can prevent the

[40] At the time of the report, there is not enough available data on the number of female Foreign Ministers in the Member States. In addition, there is no correlation between the capacity of a female political portfolio holder and the use of the same person in mediation missions or initiatives as there are several other criteria that need to be adhered to prior to engaging in a mediation initiative.

participation of many women with family commitments or even affect women's professional reputations.

- Non-implementation into concrete programmatic strategies of ECOWAS treaties and adherence to normative frameworks and international conventions.

- Lack of SOPs that clearly integrate gender dimensions into mediation and other peace processes.

- Lack of context-specific Gender-Sensitive Conflict analysis tools.

- Limited political will within the leadership of the ECOWAS and Member States in ensuring a gender balance in the nomination of persons as envoys, facilitators, or mediators in peace processes.

- Lack of funding, especially local funding (ECOWAS own fund streams) that is devoid of external influences, and moreover, gender-sensitive budgeting support for gender mainstreaming is mostly donor-driven.

- Lack of overarching linkages, synergies and coordination between the way ECOWAS approaches gender mainstreaming at the policy level and at the operational level, i.e., efforts to include women in

6.1 Immediate Action Points

Whereas section 8 of the report outlines a range of pertinent recommendations, some of the most immediate actions points are:

1. Continue the support through DPA to provide capacity-building to mainstream mediation and gender throughout the ECOWAS's mediation actions and initiatives;

2. Support the nomination and appointment of gender advisers in ECOWAS mediation missions as well as to the highest decision-making level;

3. Internal ECOWAS stakeholders to include gender markers within their reports to the highest decision-making authorities to achieve gendered reporting and to keep working toward the disaggregation of data.

7.0 **Conclusion**

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In conclusion, the assessment report has not been able to qualify how women influence mediation processes, and how the role of mediating women generated better-gendered outcomes. This is in part due to a lack of research data, research method, and a lack of accessible case studies. Moving forward, one of the key next steps would be to expand the research focus, by emphasizing the importance of women influencing the ECOWAS mediated peace process, and engage in mixed methods research to analyze and to identify the causes and effect of gender mainstreaming in ECOWAS.

Increasing evidence that peace is difficult to obtain or sustain without women's inclusion in the mediation process provides a learning opportunity. Peace agreements become sustainable when they are widely accepted across all demographic groups. Because women occupy social spaces such as markets and due to their roles and placement in families, this component of the society is crucial for the acceptance and sustainability of peace agreements. Evidence of this observable and crucial role of women, however, needs to be brought to fore through research and mediation practices and linked with political decision-making. [41]

While research has made strides in providing evidence that involving women at the Track I level makes for certain validation of working peace agreements, member states have understood that providing women with the capacity and the platform to sit at the table is key. This issue is no longer a subject for debate. The question should move beyond this mundane debate about whether to give women a role but advance toward the lines of interrogating the degree to which women's involvement results in better peace agreements. This implies the analysis of the correlation between women's involvement and improved peace agreements, rather than questioning causality between the two factors.[42]

It is therefore important to ask whether women can exert influence over the peace process. In this sense, building networks appears to be a successful strategy. Owing to their capacity to lobby, a skill honed over the course of negotiating through everyday social and economic processes, women

[41] Pascal Da Rocha from the questionnaire.

[42] Ibid

can make an important contribution to peace processes, bringing these negotiation skills to bear especially at the negotiating and closing out phases of peace agreements. Women are also able to push for fundamental issues. As a group, they can, arguably, push more for women and gender issues overall, and when they are strongly involved, these issues become much more concrete.[43] When formal negotiations stop and any engagement with the adverse party is seen as a betrayal, women have shown to be able to cross the divide and engage in dialogue with women from the other side on non-political issues, thus maintaining an open channel of communication.[44]

Women have in some cases managed to play a critical role in informal negotiation processes as well – often preparing the ground for negotiations and bridging divides. Women's organisations and other international organisations and donors have implemented training and capacity-building workshops for women – to impart conflict mediation and resolution skills, and the skills necessary for political participation. Nevertheless, even in situations where women have played a greater role and where inclusive negotiations have resulted in the development of new formal, more equitable 'rules of the game', there is often no real shift in exclusionary power relations. In Guatemala, for example, new gender equality structures were politically sidelined and under-resourced. In many contexts, women have been unable to influence the informal 'rules of the game'.

The progressive inclusion of women in peace processes requires political will to mainstreaming gender in PAPS programs and activities, in terms of strategies, plans, budget allocation, implementation, and monitoring. The incremental processes of gender inclusion also require innovative training approaches such as mentoring and shadowing[45] for mediators and deputy mediators, instead of other common training methods. This will gradually improve the skills and competence of women mediators and move the ECOWAS towards gender parity in the mediation.

"The assumption that having women at the table results in a more gender-sensitive process (or the inclusion of more gender-sensitive content in peace agreements) is also problematic. For instance, in Track I processes, women representing negotiating parties at the

[43] It is important to point out that having more women at the table does not always imply that women's issues are being fundamentally addressed. Often some women are unable to articulate women's needs and preferences or to push for the implementation of women's interests. See: Fumni Olonisakin

[44] Pascal Da Rocha from the Interviews

[45] Mariama Conte from the interviews

table are likely to be present by virtue of their position as part of delegations. Just like men or even more so, they have fought hard to prove to be effective in representing the political views of their party and seek credibility. Consequently, being perceived as championing 'gender issues' is unlikely to be a primary strategy or approach as it can result in backlash. Furthermore, the gender-based bias goes both ways – there are also men who champion gender norms at the peace table albeit these examples are only beginning to make it into the mainstream women, peace and security agenda."[46]

[46] Julia Palmiano Federer (2016). On Gender - The Role of Norms in International Peace Mediation, accessed: https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/196037/1_2016_online.pdf.

8.0 Overview of Recommendations

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	Strategic Priorities	Structural Priorities	Operational Priorities
Short term	High-level policy dialogue/ retreat on mediation processes and gender inclusivity. Institutionalize national peace infra-structures as platforms for dialogue and mediation in member states To work on good practices and sharing of cases, knowledge, experience, and actions. Identification of regional women/youth platforms that can bring pressure to bear on the implementation of the peace agreements. Awareness creation of Gender inclusivity in Mediation process-es at management level to ensure Gender balance in Media-tion interventions. Capacity building on Gender Mainstreaming. Criteria of selection of Mediators. Senior Gender Advisor attached as part of Mediation process-es. Development of a comprehensive database of Women Medi-ators. Legislation for inclusivity of "relevant women". In developing the documentation, Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security to work closely with other relevant Departments of the commission, particularly, the Social Affairs and Gender, MS, and CSOs. Review of all Normative frameworks in Mediation-ECOWAS, AU, UN.	Sensitization of ECOWAS staff on the need to mainstream Gender in Mediation. Proper and effective implementation of policies in favour of mainstreaming Gender in Mediation. Linking the work of Early Warning to media-tion in a timely manner. West African young Women's network needs to be better structured to serve the relevant needs. The PAPS women, peace, and security committee to enlarge its membership to the Humanitarian and Social Affairs Depart-ment. ECOWAS to put in place a Mechanism to monitor women's effective participation to Mediation initiatives in the region. Develop a database of gender experts who can be deployed on a short-term basis to support mediation processes.	Systematically seeks the advice of the Humanitarian and Social Affairs Department (for gender inclusivity) when planning deploy mediation initiatives. Ensure that the composition of the mediation support team is balanced: Men and Women. Ensuring inclusion of Gender balance in the Mediation support team. Political Advisers in ECOWAS field offices to be made aware of Gender inclusivity. Resourcing all Gender inclusion initia-tives adequately. Capacity building for young women as Mediators Initiate actions to support national dialogue processes Operationalize the FemWise West Africa

Medium term	Development and use of Gender-sensitive indicator(s) to monitor the implementation of the peace agreement. Creation of Gender Desk within political Affairs with much focus on Mediation at all levels. Identification of an eminent personality to champion Gender and Mediation. Development of Gender sensitive indicators and checklist for Mediation efforts. To conduct comprehensive research to document best practices of Gender mainstreaming in Mediation efforts Women Leaders involved in Mediation at the local level should be identified, trained, and invited to participate in cross-country Mediation initiatives in the region. Women presence at the table/process. Development of an ECOWAS Mediation policy. Development of ECOWAS Gender and Mediation Strategy and Action Plan (to be a component or subset of the policy). Development /establishment of a coordination mechanism/ structures for Women Mediation initiatives. ECOWAS, in partnership with international stakeholders, should support programs geared towards the creation of awareness on Gender implications in Mediation processes. ECOWAS to develop an SOP on mediation with a component on mainstreaming Gender in Mediation. Support Gender and mediation components of Member States' National Action Plan of 1325 Institutionalise the FemWise West Africa as a supporting structure to the Council of the Wise	Set up the Secretariat of the COW within the MCRPAD to support the CoW organ Development of Mediation SOPs to assist deployment of Mediation process and design. Promoting communication and sharing on gender mainstreaming and inclusive Mediation. To develop a regional gender integration mediation manual. Mediation Division to build synergy/ relationship with gender-oriented peace mediation networks such as ECOWAS and AU FemWise. Department of Social Affairs to work closely with the Mediation and Gender division. Political Affairs peace and security Department to have a Senior Gender adviser/focal point. Support the institutionalization of national peace infrastructures as platforms for dia- logue and mediation in member states.	Identifying and train women in anticipation of being nominated into the CoW / and or being engaged in other ECOWAS Mediation processes. Entrust the Gender initiatives in the custody of an equally male and female agency. Capacity building for young women as Mediators. Development of educational materials and curriculum for professionalization of women Mediators through accreditation processes. Develop Guidelines on gender mainstreaming in mediation. Initiate and institutionalize an annual meeting/forum of gender experts in mediation to share lessons learnt on mediation the processes

Long term	To implement quota laws and Gender parity policies in member state institutions, public administration, and ECOWAS. There should be a formation of group networks like Social media Inclusion of Women and Youth platforms for networking. Development of a Gender and Mediation policy /Framework with linkages of track I, II, III. Inclusion of Young Women in Mediation Teams to learn and to observe	Creation of synergy between Gender center and PAPS Department. The Key existing instrument should be implemented by member states. Regional documents should be published on cases of women's success/failure in the Mediation process. Institutionalizing Debriefing of Mediation process. To introduce Mediation as a subject in the educational system. Department of Social Affairs & Gender to work closely with DPA on mediation-related issues with a gender focus.	Induction/ retreat of CoW and ECOWAS FemWise Ensure that Mediation Strategy considers how to engage with Women. To include gender quota for mediation teams

Annex 1

List of experts that participated in the final validation meeting of the Gender Inclusivity and Effective Mediation Processes in West Africa, held in Accra, Ghana from the 29th September to 2nd October, 2019.

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