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# Empowering local women in peace processes

*A Case Study on the  
Swedish Women's Mediation Network*



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## Abstract

A variety of research has been done on why it is important to include local women in peace processes to gain a more sustainable peace. Despite this, there is a limited amount of information and research about women mediation networks and their aim to empower local women peacebuilders. This research explores how women mediation networks can support and empower women in conflict resolutions in relation to the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. By using semi-structured interviews and literature analysis, a case study of the Swedish Women's Mediation Network will be conducted. The analysis of the Swedish Women's Mediation Network, reveals that the network mainly works with the representation of women and uses capacity-building to empower women in other regions. This research brings more awareness to the Women Mediation Networks and their mission to increase the number of women in peace processes.

**Keywords:** *Women Mediation Network, peace processes, Swedish Women's Mediation Network, Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy, UNSCR 1325*



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## List of Abbreviations

FBA - Folke Bernadotte Academy

FemWise-Africa - The Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation

ILAC - International Legal Assistance Consortium

IPI - International Peace Institute

MWMN - Mediterranean Women Mediators Network

NWM - Nordic Women Mediators

ProWSA - Program for Women's Strategic Advancement

SRHR - Sexual and reproductive health and rights

SRSG - Special Representative to the Secretary-General

SWMN - Swedish Women's Mediation Network

UN - United Nations

UNSCR - United Nations Security Council Resolution

WMN - Women's Mediation Network

WPS-agenda - Women, Peace and Security Agenda



## 1. Introduction

Conflict is a constant element in the world we live in and approaches on how to end it have been explored for many years. One such approach is the practice of conflict mediation. Mediation has been used to resolve or prevent conflict ever since the Greek and Roman times<sup>1</sup> and is still being used in peace processes today. Mediation is often used in relation to negotiation. In *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall define negotiation as ‘the process whereby the parties within the conflict seek to settle or resolve their conflicts’.<sup>2</sup> The authors then define mediation as ‘the intervention of a third party’.<sup>3</sup> There can be both a pure mediation approach and a mediation with muscle approach. With pure mediation, the parties are still in control over the outcome and it is a voluntary process. Mediation with muscle sometimes uses positive or negative incentives to control the outcome.<sup>4</sup>

In recent years, the importance of including female mediators in peace negotiations has been stressed by the United Nations (UN).<sup>5</sup> However, research has shown that the majority of mediators working with peace processes and negotiations are still men.<sup>6</sup> UN Women have reported that in 31 peace processes from 1992-2011, women had a 35% participation rate or less in 14 out of 31 negotiations teams and there was a 35% participation rate or less of women lead mediators in 3 out of 31 peace processes. In both these categories, the remaining peace processes had no participation of women.<sup>7</sup> In another study, by the Council on Foreign Relations and UN Women, women have only made up three percent of

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<sup>1</sup> Ramsbotham, 2016, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Ramsbotham, 2016, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Ramsbotham, 2016, p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> Ramsbotham, 2016, p. 35.

<sup>5</sup> Security council resolution 1325, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Potter, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> UN Women, 2012, pp. 4-5.



mediators and thirteen percent of negotiators in major peace processes between 1992-2018.<sup>8</sup> A global network of women mediators has been created to increase the participation of female peacebuilders on a local level in an effort to promote gender equality in both peace processes and in society. This has been done as a way to follow the developed agenda for Women, Peace and Security (WPS agenda) that started with the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) that was adopted in 2000. A part of the objective of that agenda is to appoint more women to UN peacekeeping operations and field missions and to increase women's participation in decision-making at a regional, national and international level.<sup>9</sup> It has been shown that peace processes that include women are 35% more likely to last for at least 15 years because the agreements are more sustainable.<sup>10</sup> Women have shown that they are more inclusive in their negotiations and mediations,<sup>11</sup> focusing on furthering their acceptance of others. In contrast, men have been suggested to focus on primarily furthering their own interests.<sup>12</sup>

## 1.1 Research Problem

Today, most conflicts are happening within a country rather than between countries.<sup>13</sup> Because of this, it has become more vital to have local peacebuilders to ensure that sustainable peace can be reached.<sup>14</sup> With this and the numbers presented above in mind, the topic chosen for this research is the importance of empowering local women in peace processes. There has been a variety of research done on why women are important to consider in peace processes<sup>15</sup> but not as much on what role women mediation networks play in bringing awareness to the topic. This

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<sup>8</sup> Council of Foreign Relations, n.d.

<sup>9</sup> Cohn, 2004, p. 130.

<sup>10</sup> Council of Foreign Relations, n.d.

<sup>11</sup> Turner, 2019, pp. 1-2.

<sup>12</sup> Klein, 2012, pp. 286-287.

<sup>13</sup> United Nations, n.d.

<sup>14</sup> Alliance for Peacebuilding & Peace Direct, 2019,

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, O'Reilly & Ó Súilleabháin, 2013; Klein, 2012.



could be because these networks have only emerged during the last five years and are new actors in the conflict resolution sphere. There are five regional networks in the world who are all a part of a global alliance for women mediators. This research will be narrowed down and focus on the Swedish Women's Mediation Network, which is a part of the regional network, Nordic Women Mediators. and their impact on the sphere of peace processes. The Swedish Women's Mediation Network was created in 2015 and has been active for five years. There are little information and research available about how the network operates and if their work, so far, has had an impact on the attitude towards including more women in peace processes.

## 1.2 Objective

The Folke Bernadotte Academy, a Swedish governmental agency for peace, security and development<sup>16</sup>, established the Swedish Women's Mediation Network (SWMN) in 2015 to strengthen women's voices in peace processes, particularly women on a local level.<sup>17</sup> The aim of this research is to explore how women mediation networks can support and empower women in conflict resolutions. To be able to do so, the SWMN will be analysed to gain knowledge on how they operate in this particular field. The research questions are:

- How does the Swedish Women Mediation Network operationalize the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy and UNSCR 1325 to strengthen women's role in peace processes on a local level?
- Has the Swedish Women Mediation Network had any impact on the attitude towards including more women in peace processes?

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<sup>16</sup> Folke Bernadotte Academy 1, n.d.

<sup>17</sup> Folke Bernadotte Academy, 2016.





### 1.3 Relevance

By strengthening the role of women in peace processes there is a higher chance that gender issues and women's rights will be included in the peace negotiations. This, in turn, could lead to more sustainable peace and better development for the country. The importance of women in peace processes has, as mentioned, been discussed by the United Nations' security council and they recognized this by adopting the UNSCR 1325 in 2000.<sup>18</sup> This research could be helpful to bring more awareness to the SWMN and highlight their work in gender equality. It could also serve as a source of clarification on what the SWMN does and what their aim is.

This year also marks the 20th anniversary of the WPS agenda and it has been five years since the SWMN was established. Because of this, it feels particularly relevant to research the SWMN and Women Mediation Networks (WMN) at this moment in time since they can be argued to be a product of UNSCR 1325. The global network of women mediators consists of smaller networks from different parts of the world such as the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network and the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa). As stated previously, the most relevant network for this research is the Swedish Women's Mediation Network which is a part of the Nordic Women Mediators.<sup>19</sup>

### 1.4 Structure

A brief outline of the study's nine chapters will be presented below.

Following the introduction, chapter two presents the previous research that is relevant to the topic and gives the reader a background as to why it

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<sup>18</sup> Security Council resolution 1325, 2000.

<sup>19</sup> Global Women Mediators (available online).



is important to include women in peace processes, how it is a male-dominated field, and research that has been done on the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

In chapter three, UNSCR 1325 and the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy will be presented as the theoretical framework.

Chapter four thoroughly outlines the methodological framework with a description of the chosen case study, how the interviews were coordinated and conducted, and how the data have been analysed.

Chapter five will give the reader a background to local peacebuilding and why it can be important.

In the sixth chapter, the reader will get a background to the Women Mediation Networks that exist. They will be discussed in the analysis and therefore it is important to provide the reader with that information.

The seventh chapter will present the findings that were made from the collected data from articles, interviews and audio recordings. This will be done in relation to the research questions.

Chapter eight consists of the analysis and is divided into two sub-categories. The first one focus on Rights, Representation, Resources and Reality, that is in line with the Swedish Feminist foreign policy. The second one will discuss UNSCR 1325's objectives that are related to representation, participation and inclusion.

The final chapter, the conclusion of the study, will present findings from the analysis to answer the research questions. It will also provide suggestions for further research that could be done on this topic.



## 2. Previous Research

There has been previous research done on the subject of women in mediation.<sup>20</sup> The research includes the importance of women in peace processes<sup>21</sup>, how it has been and still is a male-dominated field,<sup>22</sup> and how the WPS agenda has affected women in peace processes.<sup>23</sup> Most of the research found has been done from the year 2005 and up until now. This might be because many researchers refer to or use the WPS agenda, that was adopted on the 31st of October 2000, in their arguments. The previous research outlines women and mediation on a broader spectrum and why it is important to learn more about gender equality in peace processes.

### 2.1 Importance of women

There are different reasons as to why women can prove to be important in peace processes. On the mediation level, certified mediator Roohia S. Klein, argues that women have a more compromising approach than men. Compromising means that one tries to meet in the middle and partly satisfy both parties' concerns.<sup>24</sup> This can be effective in some situations where it could be more important to reach a profitable agreement to maintain good relationships rather than holding out to gain the best possible outcome.<sup>25</sup> From a broader perspective, the International Peace Institute (IPI) published an issue brief in 2013 on why women matter in peace negotiations. The authors point out that women can bring alternative approaches and new perspectives on conflict prevention and resolution. They use the UNSCR 1325 to strengthen their arguments but also reflect on the fact that the UNSCR 1325 was adopted thirteen years ago (the issue brief was written in 2013) and that there was still a limited

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<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Turner, 2019; Hillbert, 2017; Cooks and Hale, 1992.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, O'Reilly & Ó Súilleabháin, 2013; Klein, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Potter, 2005; Willett, 2010; Barraza Vargas, 2019.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Turner, 2018; Willett, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Klein, 2012, pp.294–295.

<sup>25</sup> Klein, 2012, pp.295–296.



number of women in senior peacemaking positions.<sup>26</sup> UN Women has also explained that “Women’s full and equal participation at all levels of society is a fundamental human right”.<sup>27</sup>

## 2.2 A male-dominated field

As mentioned in the introduction, men hold the majority of conflict mediation positions. In an opinion paper by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the author presents some challenges women meet and presumptions about why women do not work with conflict mediation. One presumption is that the conflict parties subject to mediation are often men and so, they will be more susceptible to work with a male mediator. Especially in areas where they have a strongly patriarchal culture and where women are not allowed in power positions.<sup>28</sup> This might be true in some cases but the research shows that it is not as common as one might think. In the same opinion paper, the researcher presents a case where a person’s institutional backing trumps their gender. The author states that ‘To some Afghans, for example, a foreign woman with some recognizable power can be dealt with as a man. She is not the same as an Afghan woman’.<sup>29</sup> The paper was written in 2005 and also states that only six women ever held the position as a Special Representative to the Secretary-General (SRSG) within the UN and four of them held the position before the UNSCR 1325 was adopted in 2000.<sup>30</sup> In an article written by Susan Willett in 2010, the number of female SRSGs is brought up again. Willett writes that since UN peacekeeping was established in 1949 up until 2009, there had only been seven female SRSGs.<sup>31</sup> This means that ten years after the UNSCR 1325 was adopted, only three women were appointed as SRSGs. Recent studies show that the number

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<sup>26</sup> O’Reilly & Ó Súilleabháin, 2013.

<sup>27</sup> UN Women, 2018.

<sup>28</sup> Potter, 2005, p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> Potter, 2005, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> Potter, 2005, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Willett, 2010, p. 151.



of women in higher positions within the UN and other organizations has increased but they are still a minority in comparison to men.<sup>32</sup>

### 2.3 The Women, Peace and Security Agenda

There are a small number of studies examining the Women, Peace and Security agenda (WPS) that was implemented by the United Nations Security Council in 2000. Since then the UN has adopted ten resolutions on the WPS-agenda that promotes women's protection and rights in a conflict cycle and their participation in peace processes.<sup>33</sup> Since this study will use UNSCR 1325 in its theoretical framework, this sub-chapter of previous research will focus on the first resolution in the WPS-agenda, UNSCR 1325.

The research on the UNSCR 1325 spans mostly from 2005 until now. Professor Catherine Turner outlines how the UN has approached the UNSCR 1325 and if they have seen changes within the organization. Turner acknowledges the commitment from the Secretary-General but stresses that women are still underrepresented in peace processes. Research now has to focus on why women are still a minority in the women, peace and security agenda that is set by the UNSCR 1325.<sup>34</sup> In another article, Susan Willett contextualizes the struggles that the UNSCR 1325 has seen. Willett states that the resolution lacks the muscle to make states comply with the resolution. She does point out the measures that have been taken but sees them as minor and can see that the operational coherence is insufficient in implementing the UNSCR 1325.<sup>35</sup>

In summary, there has been little information found on the Swedish Women's Mediation Network or on any of the other Women Mediation Networks. It seems like the research that has been done on; if or how they

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<sup>32</sup> Barraza Vargas, 2019, pp. 541–564.

<sup>33</sup> PeaceWomen, n.d.

<sup>34</sup> Turner, 2018, p. 251.

<sup>35</sup> Willett, 2010.



have changed the landscape of peace processes or if their objectives and operations have made a difference is limited. The cause for this has been mentioned before but it is most likely because the women mediation networks are a new type of actor to consider in peace processes. That seems to be the case for the Swedish Women's Mediation Network, as it has only been operational for five years. This research will add insight into the Swedish Women's Mediation Network and their impact on peace processes.



### 3. Analytical Framework

This chapter will outline and explain the analytical framework that is based on UNSCR 1325 and the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy. They were chosen since both of them highlight the importance of empowering women in conflict resolutions and how or what the UN and the Swedish government are doing to enforce this. For the analysis, the research will focus on UNSCR 1325's mission to ensure that more women participate in peace processes<sup>36</sup> and provides support to women who have initiatives for conflict resolution.<sup>37</sup> And on the four R's that is the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy's basic principles.<sup>38</sup> The four R's will be presented further down and they will help to determine how the SWMN operates to support local women who live in countries with an ongoing conflict or in a post-conflict country. By using UNSCR 1325 the research gets international support on the importance of women while the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy is particularly relevant for the SWMN since it is Sweden's guidelines for international work. Both of these will be highly helpful to answer the research questions on how the Swedish Women Mediation Network operate to strengthen women's role in peace processes on a local level and if the Swedish Women Mediation Network has had any impact on the attitude towards including more women in peace processes.

#### 3.1 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325

UNSCR 1325 will be used as an analytical tool in the analysis of the research since this resolution was groundbreaking in bringing awareness of how a gender perspective and women are relevant in all areas of peace processes. This political framework outlines what measures should be taken to reach a more sustainable peace.<sup>39</sup> In 2000, the United Nations

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<sup>36</sup> Security Council resolution 1325, 2000, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Security Council resolution 1325, 2000, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Ministry of foreign affairs 1, 2019, p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> Peacewomen, n.d.



Security Council adopted UNSCR 1325 which has its focus on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). With this resolution, the UN wanted to, for example, reaffirm the importance of including women in peace processes, stress the need for equal participation in efforts to maintain and promote peace and security and to recognize the need to mainstream a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations.<sup>40</sup>

The document consists of 18 objectives that every Member State should strive to follow. The objectives state that a gender perspective should be adopted in field-based operations, conflict resolutions and similar tasks.<sup>41</sup> In addition to this, UNSCR 1325 draws attention to the need for the protection of women and girls against gender-based violence and human rights violations.<sup>42</sup> The Member States should also be provided with training guidelines and materials on how to protect women and girls and their human rights.<sup>43</sup> For this research, the objectives that highlight representation, participation and the inclusion of women in peace processes are the ones most relevant to use as a tool. These are for example, objective one and 15 that urges the Member States, the UN and the Secretary-General to ensure that there is an increase of female representation at all decision-making levels in peace processes, management and resolution of conflict.<sup>44</sup> That states that actors should take measures to support local women and their initiatives for peace and conflict resolution and a gender perspective is to be adopted in every aspect of the implementation of a peace agreement. Security Council missions should also consult with both international and local women's groups and consider gender equality and the rights of women.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Security Council resolution 1325, 2000.

<sup>41</sup> Security Council resolution 1325, 2000.

<sup>42</sup> Security Council resolution 1325, 2000, p.3.

<sup>43</sup> Security Council resolution 1325, 2000, p. 2.

<sup>44</sup> Security Council resolution 1325, 2000, p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> Security Council resolution 1325, 2000, p. 3.





### 3.2 The Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy

Sweden has been a strong advocate of gender equality in both the public and personal sphere and is often considered to be a role model for gender equality.<sup>46</sup> So, when Sweden became a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the 2017-2018 term, they stressed the importance of the WPS Agenda.

A few years prior to this in 2014, Sweden became the first country to implement a feminist approach to its foreign policy.<sup>47</sup> The goal of the policy is to end the discrimination and systematic subordination that women and girls encounter daily by changing structures and making women more visible as actors.<sup>48</sup> The Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy uses four Rs as their foundation. These are Rights, Representation, Resources and Reality. The idea is that the Swedish Foreign Services shall strive to support women and girls' positions in society by strengthening their Rights, Representation and Resources based on the Reality that they live in.<sup>49</sup> The handbook for the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy says the following about the Rs:

**Rights:** Every woman and girl should have the full enjoyment of human rights. All forms of discrimination and violence that restrict their freedom of action should be combated.

**Representation:** Women need to be able to participate and influence in decision-making processes in every area and at all levels.

**Resources:** To ensure the full enjoyment of human rights to every woman and girl, resources should be allocated to promote gender equality.

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<sup>46</sup> Gender equality in Sweden, (available online).

<sup>47</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1, 2019, p. 9.

<sup>48</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1, 2019, p. 9-11.

<sup>49</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1, 2019, p. 11.



Targeted measures for different target groups should also be taken into consideration.<sup>50</sup>

**Reality:** Where the women and girls are living, their reality, has to be considered when promoting the other three Rs.<sup>51</sup>

To be able to follow the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy, the Swedish Foreign Services have created an action plan that is updated annually and that has six long-term external objectives. The objectives for the 2019-2022 action plan, that the Swedish Foreign Service shall contribute to is that all women and girls shall have:

1. Full enjoyment of human rights
2. Freedom from physical, psychological and sexual violence
3. Participation in preventing and resolving conflicts, and post-conflict peacebuilding
4. Political participation and influence in all areas of society
5. Economic rights and empowerment
6. Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)<sup>52</sup>

Since the focus of this research is on the participation of women in peace processes, objective three and possibly four, together with the four R's and UNSCR 1325 will be used in the theoretical framework for the analysis of this research.

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<sup>50</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1, 2019, p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1, 2019, p. 11.

<sup>52</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1, 2019, p. 19.



## 4. Methodology

This chapter will present the methodological framework that is used in this qualitative case study on the Swedish Women's Mediation Network. It will begin by explaining the selection of the case study to best answer the research questions;

- How does the Swedish Women Mediation Network operationalize the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy and UNSCR 1325 to strengthen women's role in peace processes on a local level?
- Have the Women Mediation Networks had any impact on the attitude towards including more women in peace processes?

This is followed by a presentation of the research methods that were chosen to conduct this study and a discussion on the availability of data and limitations. The main source for data collection will be from different materials, such as articles, reports and audio recordings and semi-structured interviews. Because of a lack of research, on the Swedish Women's Mediation Network it has been important to include interviews as an additional means to assess their work and influence. The data will be analysed in relation to the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy's basic principles; Rights, Representation, Resources and Reality and through UNSCR 1325's objectives that deal with representation, participation and inclusion.

### 4.1 Case Study

A case study is a method used to conduct a detailed analysis of a specific case within a certain topic.<sup>53</sup> The case is often a community, an organization or person.<sup>54</sup> In this study, the Swedish Women's Mediation Network serves as a case on how a Women Mediation Network can operationalize the Swedish

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<sup>53</sup> Bryman, 2016, p. 60.

<sup>54</sup> Bryman, 2016, p. 40.



Feminist Foreign Policy and UNSCR 1325. The reason why the SWMN was chosen is due to the fact that they were one of the first Women Mediation Network to be created and therefore have been active the longest. This could give knowledge to other networks that have been created or that could be created in the future.

By doing a single-case study, this research is able to do a deeper analysis of the Swedish Women's Mediation Network. Their aim and their way of operating become clear and it is possible to analyse it in relation to the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy. It can be argued that having a single-case study could also be a problem. By only interviewing women who are active within the Swedish Women's Mediation Network, there could be a potential bias. If, for example, the case study had been on the Nordic Women Mediators, the research could cross-reference and compare the findings between all five national women's networks.

To answer the research questions, the chosen case has been analysed using, articles, documents and briefs. Certain themes were looked at when analysing the material. First, it considered the relevance to the topic. Secondly, the analysis looked for correlations between the material and the four basic principles of the Swedish Feminist Foreign policy. And lastly, material that explored the UNSCR 1325 and its objectives related to representation, participation and inclusion were examined.

There is a limited amount of material on the SWMN which is why interviews were also conducted. The interviews will be able to support the material that does exist or draw parallels between the SWMN and other women mediation network or organizations that work towards empowering women in peace processes.



## 4.2 Semi-structured Interviews

There are different approaches on how to conduct interviews in qualitative research. The interviews for this research were semi-structured to allow the participant to tell their personal experience in their own way. Even though semi-structured interviews are flexible there are still certain topics or questions that one follows during the interview. This is called an interview guide which the interviewer uses to structure the interview, based off what they want to get out of the interview.<sup>55</sup> The same interview guide was used in every interview to make sure that every participant was being asked the same questions. Since the interviews were semi-structured, the participant could change the direction of the interview or the interviewer could ask follow-up questions based on the answers they were getting. The goal of the interviews was to get a firsthand insight into the Swedish Women's Mediation Network. Some examples of questions that were included in the interview guide are:

- What type of work do you do to strengthen local women's participation in mediation processes?
- In what way does UNSCR 1325 influence your work?
- How does the Swedish Women's Mediation Network collaborate with other actors such as other Women Mediation Networks, Governments or Civil Society?
- Does the network consider the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy in its work?

Five semi-structured interviews have been conducted with women who currently or previously have worked with the SWMN to serve as a support to the already existing material. They will also make it possible to draw parallels between how they operate in relation to the objectives of UNSCR 1325 and the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy. The length of each interview varied between 40 minutes to an hour, depending on how much time the participant had to spare.

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<sup>55</sup> Bryman, 2016, pp. 468.



Interviews were conducted via Skype or WhatsApp and before the interview, the participants were asked if it would be okay if the session was recorded. They were informed that the recordings would only be used for this research and nothing else. Each session was then transcribed and divided into three categories; The Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy's influence on the SWMN, Empowering local women and changing structures. These categories will also serve as sub-chapters in the findings- and analysis chapter.

Protecting participants' anonymity is central to ethical social research. It is vital to ensure that all participants feel comfortable to open up and speak freely about the topic being researched. Because of this, every participant was informed at the beginning of the interview that their anonymity would be protected in the research. For that reason, the participants will only be referred to as participant 1, 2, 3 and so on when referenced. The number each participant get represents in which order they were interviewed. The selection of participants was made in relation to their relevance to the SWMN. All five women who participated are currently involved with the network or have previously been involved with the network, either as members or as coordinators. There are 15 members in total in the SWMN and they all have different backgrounds and experiences within the sphere of peace processes. Two of the members of the SWMN have participated in a podcast hosted by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which they discuss women's participation in peace processes and how the SWMN operate in different ways to strengthen local women.<sup>56</sup> Their contribution and answers on that podcast were in line with the questions in this research's interview-guide. Because of this, it was decided that the interviews that had been obtained combined with the podcast would be enough to be able to support other materials on how the SWMN operates to empower women peacebuilders. The decision to also interview coordinators was made because they have a broader view on what projects, meetings and workshops that the SWMN might be participating in.

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<sup>56</sup> UD-podden, 2018.



### 4.3 Limitations

The study did encounter some limitations which are important to consider. The data available on what type of project the SWMNs are involved in is limited. This could be due to the fact that it has only existed for five years and so, projects might still be operational or it might be too early to report on their achievements. In addition to this, it has been noted that the SWMN is mostly visible to people who are working in the same area of expertise. There were also a limited amount of available participants when this research was conducted which can be a limitation on information. With more interviews comes more data and other projects or insights from the SWMN might have been discovered.

Another limitation is the fact that the interviews had to be conducted via video- or telephone calls using Skype or WhatsApp, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It would have been more ideal to conduct the interviews in person but this was not an option since the safety of both the participants and the interviewer are more important. Conducting interviews via platforms like Skype can have its own limitations. Studies have shown that the absence of viewing live body language makes it harder for both the interviewer and the participant to read each other's body language, emotions and other non-verbal cues.<sup>57</sup> Other more technical difficulties can also occur that could affect the interview. Both Skype and WhatsApp are depending on a good internet connection. During one session, the internet got disconnected on the interviewer's end but was restored shortly and the interview was not too affected by this short interruption. Since this study does not explore a particularly sensitive topic, Skype and WhatsApp were considered to be a viable option for data collection if the limitations were considered and reflected upon.

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<sup>57</sup> Seitz, 2016.



## 5. Local peacebuilding

Because this research has a focus on how the SWMN operates to empower local women in peace processes, it is important to outline what local peacebuilding entails and why it is important. Peacebuilding became a dominant tool in the global governance system at the beginning of the 1990s as a response to the new challenges of state failure and internal violence that the international community were facing.<sup>58</sup> This means that international peace initiatives became prominent when for example, negotiating peace agreements and supplying political, technical and financial support to a conflict-affected area.<sup>59</sup> Since then, the practice of peacebuilding has changed in various ways<sup>60</sup> and throughout the years, the tool of peacebuilding has seen failures and received critique for being inadequate in managing intrastate conflicts.<sup>61</sup> One argument that has been widely agreed upon is that peace will only be sustainable if it is more locally driven by civil societies and institutions in the affected country.<sup>62</sup> These actors possess the knowledge to judge what measures might work and has the motivation to ensure their implementations.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, it has become vital to empower local peacebuilders and to consider their sociocultural structures and practices.<sup>64</sup>

The inclusion of local women in peace processes has, as mentioned before, a higher chance of resulting in sustainable peace. Because of this, there is a number of local peacebuilding initiatives that aim to provide democratic participation and leadership training for women.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015, p. 826.

<sup>59</sup> Alliance for Peacebuilding and Peace Direct, 2019.

<sup>60</sup> Öjendal et al., 2017, p.11.

<sup>61</sup> Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015, p. 826.

<sup>62</sup> Alliance for Peacebuilding and Peace Direct, 2019.

<sup>63</sup> Alliance for Peacebuilding and Peace Direct, 2019.

<sup>64</sup> Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015, p. 826.

<sup>65</sup> Alliance for Peacebuilding and Peace Direct, 2019.





## 6. The evolution of women's mediation networks

This year marks the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325. As mentioned earlier, the resolution that launched the women, peace and security agenda was one of its kind and brought forward the importance of women's inclusion in peace processes.<sup>66</sup> Fifteen years after its adoption, in 2015, the first Women Mediation Networks were created. This chapter will give a short presentation to the networks that are a part of the Global Alliance of Regional Mediator Networks.

### 6.1 Nordic Women Mediators (NWM)

The first women mediation network was created as a collaboration between the five Nordic countries - Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden in November 2015. Each country has its own national women mediators' network and this creates the collaborative forum that is NWM. The mission of NWM is to increase the inclusion and meaningful participation of women in peace processes. The idea is that this will, in turn, boost efforts to achieve and sustain peace in a country.<sup>67</sup> To be able to achieve the mission, the network has created a set of objectives. A few of these objectives deal with how women's participation can be strengthened. The NWM will, for example, advocate for inclusiveness in all peace processes, create and develop partnerships with organisations and other mediation and peacebuilding networks, engage in joint activities with partners and to strengthen female peacemakers voices in conflict-affected areas.<sup>68</sup>

The NWM consists of women who have professional expertise that is relevant to peacebuilding, conflict mediation and negotiations. The members have different professional backgrounds in international law, foreign affairs and diplomacy, organisations such as the UN and the EU, and lastly civil society. All the members share a commitment to achieve sustainable peace through the inclusion

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<sup>66</sup> Peacewomen, n.d.

<sup>67</sup> Global Women Mediators, NWM, n.d.

<sup>68</sup> Global Women Mediators, NWM, n.d.



of women in peace processes.<sup>69</sup> The Swedish Women Mediators Network is a part of the NWM and so, it was one of the first women mediators networks that were created.<sup>70</sup>

## 6.2 The Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa)

One important pillar in the Peace and Security Architecture of the African Union (APSA) is the Panel of Wise which consists of five African members who are highly respected and who have contributed in an outstanding way to peace, development and security on the continent.<sup>71</sup> The second women mediators network, FemWise-Africa, was officially launched 4 July 2017 and is a subsidiary mechanism of the Panel of Wise.<sup>72</sup> The network's framework aims to recruit and train Women Mediators from across the continent<sup>73</sup> and to provide them with a platform for women in conflict prevention and mediation by networking, strategic advocacy and capacity-building.<sup>74</sup> FemWise-Africa's objectives include the strive to professionalize the role of women who work in preventive diplomacy and mediation at all levels and to work in line with the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's "Agenda 2063" for the mainstreaming of women's engagement in mediation.<sup>75</sup>

## 6.3 The Women Mediators across the Commonwealth

In July 2017, following the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in April of that same year, The Women Mediators across the Commonwealth was launched. The peacebuilding organisation in charge of coordinating the network is Conciliation Resources and currently, there are 46 members from 21 different Commonwealth countries in the network. The Women Mediators across the Commonwealth are envisaging an increase in the visibility of the important

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<sup>69</sup> Global Women Mediators, NWM, n.d.

<sup>70</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2, n.d. p. 9.

<sup>71</sup> African Union Peace and Security 2, 2018.

<sup>72</sup> Global Women Mediators, FemWise, n.d.

<sup>73</sup> African Union Peace and Security 1, 2018.

<sup>74</sup> Global Women Mediators, FemWise, n.d.

<sup>75</sup> Global Women Mediators, FemWise, n.d.



work that women mediators are doing in relation to addressing conflict and sustainable peacebuilding.<sup>76</sup>

As with the NWM, members of the Women Mediators across the Commonwealth brings together experienced women mediators who can share their experiences and learn from each other. They operate using mediation training, network development workshops and peer to peer learning initiatives.<sup>77</sup>

## 6.4 Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN)

The fourth regional network was established in October 2017 and it consists of approximately 40 members from the countries around the Mediterranean region.

<sup>78</sup> As with the other networks, it is women with professional expertise in mediation, and their aim is to bridge the gap that exists in capacity-building and networking in that region. By doing so, they want to promote the appointment of high-level women mediators at both the global and local level. The MWMN further intends to foster coordination and synergies in already existing initiatives.<sup>79</sup>

## 6.5 Arab Women Mediators Network

The latest network to be created is the Arab Women Mediators Network. The first meeting between the League of Arab States and UN Women that discussed the establishment of the Arab Women Mediators Network was held in July 2019. In this meeting, women's participation in negotiation and mediation processes was discussed, as well as, how women in the Arab region can be included effectively. Representatives from 15 member states participated in the meeting and members from the NMM and the MWMN attended as speakers.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Global Women Mediators, Women Mediators Across the Commonwealth, n.d.

<sup>77</sup> Global Women Mediators, Women Mediators Across the Commonwealth, n.d.

<sup>78</sup> Women Mediators, n.d.

<sup>79</sup> Global Women Mediators, MWMN, n.d.

<sup>80</sup> Global Women Mediators, Arab Women Mediators Network, n.d.



The objectives of the Arab Women Mediators Network outlines that the network focuses on the support of women's meaningful and legislative participation in peace processes and that they will create networks that create a platform where women mediators can interact and share experiences with each other.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Global Women Mediators, Arab Women Mediators Network, n.d.



## 7. Research results

In this chapter, the findings will be presented in relation to the research questions in this paper.

### 7.1 How does the Swedish Women Mediation Network operationalize the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy and UNSCR 1325 to strengthen women's role in peace processes on a local level?

As mentioned earlier, the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy was established as a way to ensure that a gender perspective was implemented in every aspect of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' work.<sup>82</sup> One way of enabling that was to establish the SWMN. As a result of this, Sweden also encouraged and were consulted when the MWMN and FemWise-Africa were established.<sup>83</sup>

In an effort to strengthen women's role in peace processes, the Swedish Women's Mediation Network was established in 2015. It was initiated by the former Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Margot Wallström,<sup>84</sup> and Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) was tasked to coordinate the network. The initial focus of the network was to have the members be a part of peace processes as mediators.<sup>85</sup> This focus has shifted since, and it is now more about enabling women on a local level to be included and to, in a meaningful way, participate in peace processes before, during and after conflict.<sup>86</sup> It is easy to jump to the conclusion that the SWMN has its only focus on mediation because of the name and that the members are all currently, or have been, mediators. As mentioned above, that was the initial thought but it did become clear early on in this research, that this is not the case. One participant stated that;

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<sup>82</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1, 2020, p.11.

<sup>83</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2, n.d. p. 9.

<sup>84</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs 3, n.d.

<sup>85</sup> Interview, Participant 4, 11/5 2020.

<sup>86</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs 3, n.d. p.1.



*“most of us who are members of the mediation network may not necessarily have been directly involved in concrete mediation efforts or peacebuilding efforts or the peacebuilding process... Most of us have been, so to speak, in margins, because this is an incredibly large and wide field of work.” -*

Interview Participant 2, 22/4 2020

Peace processes are a broad field that includes so much more than mediation and so, the members of the SWMN has a variety of different professional backgrounds working internationally and with peace processes. Some of the members currently work for the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs as, for example, Ambassadors or Head of a Departement. Others have worked or are currently working for independent organizations like the Security Council Report, or non-governmental organizations (NGO) such as the International Legal Assistance Consortium (ILAC).<sup>87</sup> Despite having different professional backgrounds, the members of the SWMN all have one thing in common. The Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy's principles are ingrained in their general thinking.<sup>88</sup>

All participants in this research agreed that the SWMN could be regarded as a tool in the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy<sup>89</sup> to promote women's participation and inclusion. The four R:s were discussed and it was easy to understand how the SWMN operates to increase the representation of women by making women more visible through capacity-building and networking. This will be explored more in the analysis of this research. How they work with Rights, Resources and Reality was less obvious and this is also something that will be discussed more in the analysis chapter. Furthermore, two of the objectives in the 2019-2020 action plan, produced by the Swedish Foreign Services, focuses on women's participation in peace processes and politics and their influence in society.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs 3, n.d.

<sup>88</sup> Interview, Participant 2, 22/4 2020.

<sup>89</sup> For example, Interview, Participant 1, 22/4 2020, Participant 3 28/4 2020, Participant 5 14/5 2020.

<sup>90</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1, 2019, p.19.



These two objectives are also in line with what the SWMN are promoting; empowering local women to increase participation.

## 7.1.1 Empowering Local Women

The research shows that the SWMN uses different approaches to implement the principles and objectives of the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy and UNSCR 1325 to support local women in conflict or post-conflict areas. One approach is to cooperate with other organizations or partners to participate in projects.<sup>91</sup> FBA together with the SWMN is currently working on a Program for Women's Strategic Advancement (ProWSA) with women in Palestine. This program "aims to increase women's meaningful participation and leadership in reconciliation, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and efforts toward ending the occupation in Palestine."<sup>92</sup> The program is directed to Palestinian women who work within state institutions, with diplomacy and reconciliation or who work with Civil Society Organizations. FBA aims to strengthen state- and peacebuilding in conflict and post-conflict areas by conducting training, research and method development.<sup>93</sup> One reason why FBA were tasked with this program was to contribute to "increase women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding processes".<sup>94</sup> One method ProWSA uses is a mentorship approach that matches Palestinian women with senior mentors, both Swedish and Palestinian, who have experience with diplomacy and foreign affairs. A few of these mentors are members of the SWMN<sup>95</sup>. Each mentor has two or three novices and they have sessions once a month. The program focuses on leadership, communication and overall self-development.<sup>96</sup> The novices in the program have reached a mid- or senior level within their area of work or have a position where they have influence.<sup>97</sup> The goal of the monthly sessions with a mentor is to support the novices and share experiences to help them take the

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<sup>91</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs 3, n.d.

<sup>92</sup> Folke Bernadotte Academy 2, n.d.

<sup>93</sup> Folke Bernadotte Academy 1, n.d.

<sup>94</sup> Folke Bernadotte Academy 2, n.d.

<sup>95</sup> Folke Bernadotte Academy 2, n.d.

<sup>96</sup> Interview, Participant 2, 22/4 2020.

<sup>97</sup> Folke Bernadotte Academy 2, n.d.



next step in their career to reach a higher-level position.<sup>98</sup> The mentors represent that it is possible for women to have a high-level position within peace processes.<sup>99</sup> ProWSA also has seminars and are planning on having two study visits, one to Stockholm and one to Northern Ireland to meet with other women who also have experience of being a part of a peace process.<sup>100</sup>

The SWMN can also be invited by, for example, the Swedish embassy in another country to attend meetings with parliamentarians or ministers to open up the discussion of including more women in their decision-making.<sup>101</sup> The network prefers when they can be a part of a project from the beginning or be a guest lecture in an already established project or process with an already established foundation.<sup>102</sup> They do sometimes do a one-off effort that during, for example, a seminar, creates a lot of great ideas but without an established foundation there is a risk that it will not have the desired effect.<sup>103</sup> It is deemed more important to engage fully or partially in established projects.

*“[It is] important to feel that this must be done over time, it is not a one-off effort but it is something we have to keep in mind and also watch over...”* - Margareta Wahlström<sup>104</sup>

Because the women in the SWMN also work closely with UNSCR 1325, they can represent that agenda and have a professional background that legitimizes their knowledge on that topic.

### 7.1.2 Changing Structures

The goal to get more women included in peace processes will take time. To change people's minds or perspective on women's inclusion, social structures will have to change. It is not enough to get more women included in peace

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<sup>98</sup> Interview, Participant 5, 14/5 2020.

<sup>99</sup> Interview, Participant 5 14/5 2020.

<sup>100</sup> Interview, Participant 2, 22/4 2020.

<sup>101</sup> Interview, Participant 1, 22/4 2020.

<sup>102</sup> Interview, Participant 1, 22/4 2020.

<sup>103</sup> UD-podden, 2018, 18min.

<sup>104</sup> UD-podden, 2018, 18min.





processes if that does not happen in all areas of society.<sup>105</sup> One important step to bring international attention to women's issues, rights and inclusion was the implementation of UNSCR 1325. It put pressure on UN Member states to think more about gender equality because it was now seen as politically correct to think more about women and their rights.<sup>106</sup>

*"[It is] important to remember that 1325, which was really groundbreaking in all respects, was a huge step forward."* - Interview Participant 2, 22/4 2020

Even though UNSCR 1325 was an important step to ensure that UN Member states think more about gender equality there are still more men on high-level positions within peace processes and in similar areas of work than women.<sup>107</sup> In theory, UNSCR 1325 might have brought a more open discussion to include more women but to then actually, implement UNSCR 1325 in practice, might still be a work in progress on both a national level as well as within the UN itself.<sup>108</sup> This can be seen in some countries where peace talks are on-going. To illustrate this, let's look at the coordinator for the Swedish Women's Mediation Network, Anna Möller-Loswicks blog post that she wrote for the FBA after attending the annual meeting for the NWMN in May 2019. The focus of that meeting was on Libya, Yemen and Afghanistan. Apart from members of the NWMN, seven women Civil society leaders from those countries had been invited to discuss the status of women's participation and influence in their respective countries. Möller-Loswick states that "the international community has not been doing enough to promote women's access and influence" across these three contexts. In Yemen, Libya and Afghanistan, an agenda for women's rights continued to be mostly absent.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Interview, Participant 2, 22/4 2020.

<sup>106</sup> Interview, Participant 1, 22/4 2020.

<sup>107</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.

<sup>108</sup> Interview, Participant 3 28/4 2020.

<sup>109</sup> Möller-Loswick, 2019.



As stated earlier in the paper, the SWMN was established on the initiation of the then Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Margot Wallström. She had noticed that when asking the question of why more women were not a part of peace processes she always got the response that "Unfortunately, there are no competent women".<sup>110</sup> The SWMN makes women with professional expertise in diplomacy or similar work within peace processes more visible by attending meetings with ministers or parliamentarians.<sup>111</sup> To ensure that the UNSCR 1325 was also considered within the UN's own peace missions or when recruiting to high-level positions within their own institution, the SWMN together with the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediators compiled a list of names with women who were experienced and qualified. This list was then given to the UN to be used in recruitment processes.<sup>112</sup> So, the argument that there are no competent women does not hold anymore.<sup>113</sup>

Another way to change social structures can be by pressure. In the case of Palestine, where the SWMN are involved in the project ProWSA Sweden, is one of the biggest contributors to the Palestinian administration. The Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), have the means to put pressure on the Palestinian structures from a high-level position. The idea with ProWSA is then that they can help to ensure that there are women with the right qualifications who can be included in peace processes on a higher-level.<sup>114</sup>

## 7.2 Has the Women Mediation Networks had any impact on the attitude towards including more women in peace processes?

The participants were asked if they could see a change in the attitude towards the inclusion of more women in peace processes since the WMN was

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<sup>110</sup> UD-podden, 2018, 06min.

<sup>111</sup> Interview, Participant 1, 22/4 2020.

<sup>112</sup> Interview, Participant 4, 11/5 2020.

<sup>113</sup> Interview, Participant 4, 11/5 2020.

<sup>114</sup> Interview, Participant 5, 14/5 2020.



established. It was argued that it might be too soon to draw a direct correlation between the changes in attitude to the establishment of the WMN but that UNSCR 1325 has played a big role in the changes that have happened.<sup>115</sup> In addition to this, when Sweden was elected as a non-permanent member of the security council, they made it a priority to bring the WPS-agenda to the forefront of most issues that were being discussed.<sup>116</sup> Yet, another argument that was given was that, from the perspective of the WMN, they can see that questions related to the WPS-agenda have gotten a larger focus due to the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediators. Although, attention was also brought to the fact that it is still hard to see if that is directly related to the WMNs or if it might be a result of the current UN General-Secretary, António Guterres' aim to prioritize these questions.<sup>117</sup> Changing attitudes and social structures can prove to be a slow process. Every country and culture adapts differently and has different obstacles they might need to overcome to be able to be more inclusive of women.

### 7.2.1 Key achievements of the Women Mediation Networks

The WMN can help to change attitudes within peace processes by increasing the capacity, visibility and representation of women in all regions. This, in turn, can increase the probability of having more women being considered for senior positions. In a brief on the WMN's that was made in 2019, states that just the establishment of the networks is an achievement in itself. The networks bring together women who can help to empower and share experiences with each other.<sup>118</sup> One participant recalled an event she had experienced while being in the Philippines and Mindanao. There were no women present at the first meeting. When she questioned if any women would participate in the next meeting she got the reply that of course there would be, they would just arrive a little later. Four women did show up to the next meeting but when she talked to

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<sup>115</sup> Interview, Participant 1, 22/4 2020, Participant 4, 11/5 2020, Participant 5 14/5 2020.

<sup>116</sup> Interview, Participant 2, 22/4 2020.

<sup>117</sup> Interview, Participant 3, 28/4 2020.

<sup>118</sup> Möller-Loswick et al., 2019.



them after the meeting she found out that their participation had not been planned.

*“Sometimes it can be so simple that you actually ask for it and they (organisers of events or meetings) do something because they do not want to be seen as almost a little, as an almost a bit like a backward organization.”* -Interview Participant 1, 22/4 2020

Because this participant had specifically asked a question on women's participation, the women had been contacted and asked to participate in the meeting.<sup>119</sup> This displays how the members of WMNs can influence and empower women's participation in different meetings. Although, it can also be argued if the women who got to participate actually had any power to play an important role in the event. The women who participated did express that they would bring their new knowledge back to their villages and share it with others.<sup>120</sup> So maybe they did not have direct power in the event, but by bringing awareness to the villages there is a possibility that they will demand the inclusion and participation of more women in the future. The brief on the WMNs also mentions that “the UN Secretary-General has expressed an interest in working together to increase the number of women in peace processes”.<sup>121</sup>

## 7.2.2 Changes within the United Nations

Since taking office in 2017, Guterres has been vocal about reaching gender parity within the UN<sup>122</sup> and ending gender inequality and the discrimination against women and girls.<sup>123</sup>

*“Finally, management reform must ensure we reach gender parity sooner rather than later. The initial target for the equal representation of women and*

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<sup>119</sup> Interview, Participant 1, 22/4 2020.

<sup>120</sup> Interview, Participant 1, 22/4 2020.

<sup>121</sup> Möller-Loswick et al., 2019.

<sup>122</sup> Guterres, 2016.

<sup>123</sup> Guterres, 2020.



*men among United Nations staff was the year 2000. Sixteen years later, we are far from that goal. I pledge to respect gender parity from the start in all my appointments to the Senior Management Group and the Chief Executives Board.” - António Guterres*<sup>124</sup>

Even though the UNSCR 1325 was groundbreaking when it was first implemented, changes within the UN has been slow. Within the political aspect of the UN, there is a lot to consider. When certain positions are to be appointed, they have rules or guidelines they are encouraged to follow.<sup>125</sup> When, for example, appointing a General-Secretary, an informal system of regional rotation and gender equality should be in regard when the Security Council recommend a candidate to the General Assembly. This means that they shall consider the regional group the candidate is from and be inclusive of women.<sup>126</sup> Despite this, there have only been three women who have been seriously considered as candidates in the 15 elections that have been held to elect a secretary-general.<sup>127</sup> When UNSCR 1325 was adopted, the Secretary-General for the UN was Kofi A. Annan and his successor was Ban Ki-moon. The 2016-process to appoint a new Secretary-General saw more female candidates than any other year. There were thirteen candidates and seven of them were women.<sup>128</sup> Despite the fact that the women had the majority, it was once again, a man who was elected. In the 2016-election, the security council disregarded both the regional rotation and gender equality. The only regional group that has not had a Secretary-General is Eastern Europe and so they should have had a stronger claim to the position. And especially so when considering the fact that four of the seven women were from Eastern European countries.<sup>129</sup> So, even within a very visible, large and international organisation as the UN, there is resistance, some could argue unconscious, to the appointment of women on high-level positions.

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<sup>124</sup> Guterres, 2016.

<sup>125</sup> Interview, Participant 4, 11/5 2020.

<sup>126</sup> UN elections, n.d.

<sup>127</sup> Security Council Report, 2017, pp. 4-5.

<sup>128</sup> Security Council Report, 2017, p. 4.

<sup>129</sup> Security Council Report, 2017, pp. 4-5.



### **7.2.3 Sweden as a non-permanent member in the Security Council**

Sweden became a member of the UN Security Council 2017-2018. As a member, their focus was on human rights, international law and gender equality. As was stated before, Sweden persistently and successfully brought attention to the WPS-agenda and made sure that it was included in all discussions and decisions.<sup>130</sup> This might not be a direct result of the SWMN but the network can be argued to have been a big part of Sweden's aim to propel questions of the WPS-agenda forward.<sup>131</sup> By bringing more attention to these questions within the Security Council's discussions, it sends a clear message to all its member states that it is an important issue and that, as a result, can have an effect and help to change the attitude towards the inclusion of women.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018.

<sup>131</sup> Interview, Participant 2, 22/4 2020.

<sup>132</sup> Interview, Participant 5, 14/5 2020.



## 8. Analysis

This chapter will analyse the findings by using the analytical tools that were explained in the theoretical framework. The tools from the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy are the four R:s in combination with objective three and four from the Swedish Foreign services 2019-2022 action plan. The objectives from UNSCR 1325 are those that are related to representation, participation and inclusion.

### 8.1 Rights, Representation, Resources, Reality

As discussed in the theoretical framework chapter, The Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy's aim is to strengthen women's and girls' Rights, Representation, Resources and Reality, the four R:s.<sup>133</sup>

The SWMN might not work directly with women's rights but by increasing the number of women in peace processes, there could be a higher chance that questions related to women's rights and issues will be considered and included when signing a peace agreement. Data from peace agreements between 1990-2017 have indicated that women's rights and issues have been underrepresented.<sup>134</sup>

The SWMN worked to strengthen women's representation in a number of different ways. According to the Swedish Feminist Foreign policy, representation is about increasing women's participation at decision-making levels. Although it is not just about increasing the number of women or filling a quota, the women who do get to participate must also have a meaningful influence. If we look at ProWSA as an example, women's representation can increase through capacity-building. By supporting and contributing to the self-development of the Palestinian novices, the hope is that their representation

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<sup>133</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1, 2019.

<sup>134</sup> Peacewomen, n.d.



will increase in their Palestinian administration and in time that one or more will be a part of a Palestinian negotiation delegation.<sup>135</sup>

The Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy's take on resources is that they should strive to allocate resources to "promote gender equality and equal opportunities for all".<sup>136</sup> The SWMN could be seen as a resource within the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy to do just that. As a member of the SWMN, the women have in their mandate to promote the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy<sup>137</sup> when they are working with other actors, which means that they can legitimately open up a dialogue about the importance of including more women to participate in peace processes.<sup>138</sup>

It is important to remember and be aware of how connected the four R:s are in the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy.<sup>139</sup> A result of increasing women's Representation could be that more Resources get allocated to gender equality and women's Rights can be improved. All these three R:s must also be considered in relation to women's Reality<sup>140</sup> and what the women in a particular country might need at that point in time.

## 8.2 UNSCR 1325's objectives related to representation, participation and inclusion

Many countries and organisations have become better at including the UNSCR 1325 in different documents such as resolutions, conflict analyses or peace agreements. However, the problem is that the topic of women, peace and security cannot just be included in one section of these documents. It has to be

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<sup>135</sup> Interview, Participant 5 14/5 2020.

<sup>136</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1, 2019, p. 13.

<sup>137</sup> Interview, Participant 4, 11/5 2020.

<sup>138</sup> Interview, Participant 3, 28/4 2020.

<sup>139</sup> Interview, Participant 2, 22/4 2020.

<sup>140</sup> Interview, Participant 2, 22/4 2020.





operationalized within every theme and section to be able to gain a more inclusive and sustainable peace and society.<sup>141</sup>

The first objective of UNSCR “Urges member states to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict.”<sup>142</sup> By including more women, the probability of more sustainable and long-lasting peace increases.<sup>143</sup> Excluding women means excluding half of the population and it can be argued that women in conflict have another perspective and experience than men in conflict. Women are often bystanders in conflict but at the same time, they are the group that often end up having to pay the price for the violence.<sup>144</sup> Their husbands, brothers and children might be recruited to fight and they are most vulnerable to sexual violence.<sup>145</sup>

Objective 15 in the UNSCR 1325 “Expresses its willingness to ensure that Security Council missions take into account gender consideration and the rights of women, including through consultation with local and international women’s groups.”<sup>146</sup> To be able to achieve this objective, Security Council missions have to gain access to women’s groups or women in an area that might have valuable information that can help the mission along. This is where female diplomats or peacebuilders can have an advantage when out in the field. They have access to the people who are at decision-making levels and are seen as a colleague of diplomacy. In addition to this, a woman also has access to the local women in that area who might not be comfortable to sit down and have a conversation with a male diplomat.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Interview, Participant 3, 28/4 2020.

<sup>142</sup> Security Council resolution 1325, 2000, p.2.

<sup>143</sup> Peacewomen, n.d.

<sup>144</sup> UD-podden, 2018, 16min.

<sup>145</sup> UD-podden, 2018, 16min.

<sup>146</sup> Security Council resolution 1325, 2000, p.3.

<sup>147</sup> Interview, Participant 2, 22/4 2020.



The SWMN and the other women mediation networks can be argued to be a tool to reach the objectives of UNSCR 1325. In only five years, since the NWMN was created, this type of women mediation network has spread and there are now five regional networks that are a part of the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediators.<sup>148</sup> This in itself, increases the visibility of women in peace processes and can influence the UN. For example, the list of professional, knowledgeable and eligible women that the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediators have presented to the UN<sup>149</sup> disproves the argument that there are no competent women to appoint to certain positions.

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<sup>148</sup> Global Women Mediators.

<sup>149</sup> Interview, Participant 4, 11/5 2020.



## 9. Conclusion

In conclusion, the SWMN is heavily influenced by both UNSCR 1325 and the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy. The UNSCR 1325 legitimizes and gives the SWMN support in their arguments as to why women are important in peace processes. The Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy can also give the network an advantage when it comes to cooperation with other countries' governments or organisations through the Swedish embassies. The personnel at the embassies are bound to work by the principles of the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy and can, therefore, invite or recommend the SWMN. The research also revealed that the SWMN prefers to be a part of processes that have a more long-term goal and an established project-plan. This can partially be achieved through cooperation with other WMNs where they can support each other and share valuable experiences but also through the organizations that the SWMN members are a part of in their daily job.

Furthermore, it was discovered that five years might be too short of a time-span to see any concrete evidence that the SWMN and other WMN has directly changed the attitude towards women in peace processes. The findings from the analysis presented evidence that the SWMN is working hard to bring more awareness to the importance of including women in peace processes. They do this via, for example, capacity-building, and by encouraging other women, that they can have a high-level position at both a national, regional and international level. Ultimately, the findings have challenged the argument that "there are no capable and competent women".

For further research, it would be interesting to interview women who have been recipients of the work that the SWMN does. To get their view on the women mediators network and the impact they have had. In addition to this, it would be interesting to do a larger study consisting of interviews with members from every network in the Global Alliance of Regional Mediator Networks to get a more diverse look into how they operate and why they think these networks are important or how they can change the landscape of peace processes.



A final takeaway from this research is that the argument that “There are no competent women” can no longer be an explanation to why there are not as many women as men on senior positions in peace processes. Clearly, there are plenty of competent women in many different regions and on many different levels who can participate in peace processes. And not only that, but there are also many experienced women who work to support and empower others who want to get more involved in order to reach a sustainable peace.

*“If peace is to be sustainable for society, then all the social partners must accept the consequences of peace”* - Margareta Wahlström, UD-podden



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## Interviewees

Interview, Participant 1, Skype, 22 April, 2020.

Interview, Participant 2, WhatsApp, 22 April, 2020.

Interview, Participant 3, WhatsApp, 28 April, 2020.

Interview, Participant 4, Voicecall, 11 May, 2020.

Interview, Participant 5, Skype, 14 May, 2020.



## Appendix 1 - Interview Guide

The interview guide below was used with all interviewees and allowed for flexibility during the interview. Before the interview, the participants got an outline of the studies purpose and were informed about anonymity and consent to record the session.

- What is your personal experience with mediation and peacebuilding processes?
- When did your interest in the inclusion of women in peacebuilding begin?
- Why did you want to be a part of the Swedish Women's Mediation Network?
- What type of work do you do to strengthen local women's participation in mediation processes?
- How does the Swedish Women's Mediation Network collaborate with other actors such as other Women Mediation Networks, Governments or Civil Society?
- In what way does UNSCR 1325 influence your work?
- Does the network consider the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy in its work?
- What kind of change can you see in peacebuilding processes, since the women mediation networks were created?