The Better Peace Initiative: Innovative Tools and Practical Framework on the ‘How to’ of Gender Inclusive Mediation:

A High Level Dialogue

Summary

On February 2, 2018, the Permanent Missions of Japan and Canada to the United Nations, and the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women, invite you to join an interactive high-level dialogue to showcase the latest animation tools and framework of the Better Peace Initiative (BPI) that are developed based on extensive field experience and consultations with seasoned mediation experts and women peacebuilders in war zones globally.

Recognizing the need to move beyond the question of why inclusivity matters in peace and mediation processes to how to do it in practice, in 2014 the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) initiated its Better Peace Initiative (BPI). The initiative includes the development of innovative animation tools and a practical 4-part implementation framework that diplomats, governments and grassroots peacebuilders can use to ensure inclusion of women peacebuilders and gender sensitivity in all aspects and stages of mediation and peace processes.

The dialogue will provide senior policy makers and seasoned mediation experts with the opportunity to advise on priority themes for the development of forthcoming tools. ICAN will also unveil its plans for the development of tailored seminars and capacity building for the evolving regional women’s mediation networks and as advisors.

Background

It has been 17 years since women-led peace organizations globally broke down the tall walls of the UN Security Council and demanded recognition of their peacemaking efforts and the right to directly engage in decision making to prevent and end wars in their countries. For good reason: since the 1990s the proliferation of actors and the growing complexity of contemporary wars has demanded new approaches to their prevention and
resolution. Research conducted across conflict zones over the past 15 years has demonstrated a) how the inclusion of civil society in peacemaking can reduce the chance of failure by over 50% and b) how women’s groups make significant contributions when present.

Despite the rhetoric and policies, women peacebuilders still face greater barriers to inclusion than others. They often find themselves challenged by barriers to enter peace negotiations, such as lack of political will among mediators and third-party negotiators, or faced with a higher bar of questions about their legitimacy and expertise. Even the international actors that claim support for women’s inclusion in peace processes are often the first to say, “we don’t know how to do it.”

By the same token while the importance of gender sensitivity is understood in theory, in practice many processes ranging from disarmament to transitional justice or devolution exclude gendered approaches, which can result in inadvertent harm and flawed programming.

ICAN’s Better Peace Tool (BPT) addresses six common barriers to inclusion. It then offers a comprehensive framework for ensuring more structured and systematic approach for inclusion of women peacebuilders and gender perspectives at all stages of peace processes.

The discussants and the audience will have an opportunity to engage with gender, mediation and peacebuilding experts from civil society, the United Nations and member states, and explore and discuss concrete recommendations for moving the inclusion of women in peace processes from rhetoric to reality.

ICAN will also provide an overview of its forthcoming plans for the continued development of its tools and related resources. It will be an opportunity to consult with participants about ways to engage the evolving networks of women mediators and develop a cadre of Better Peace Tool experts.