

The Fourth Conference on National Dialogues, 11—12 June 2019
The House of the Estates, Helsinki

Where is Gender in Dialogue Facilitation?

Objective of the session

The objective of the session is to explore the role of gender in the facilitation of dialogue processes with perspectives from dialogue stakeholders, practitioners and academia. The session aims to create a space to share good practices, reflect on challenges and foster a better understanding of how gender dynamics play out in peace processes and their facilitation.

Background

The rationale of this session stems from overlapping, partially contradictory processes. The empirically-evidenced relevance of negotiation and mediation as methods of dealing with violent conflicts has led to efforts to professionalize negotiation, mediation and facilitation to improve their effectiveness. However, professionalization turn has so far not contributed significantly to inclusiveness of mediation efforts. There is a growing consensus in the peacebuilding field that gender plays crucial roles in various dimensions of conflicts.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the question of how gender is to be included in professionalization of negotiation, mediation and facilitation in ways that embrace complexity and enhance inclusion, is still in its infancy. Usually mediators and facilitators enjoy the trust of conflicting parties for their neutrality. However, they may not be sensitized to internalize the importance of gender-sensitive mediation despite their awareness of the normative framework surrounding gender mainstreaming. Many – if not most – mediation and negotiation trainers are not gender experts. Women continue to be underrepresented in peace negotiations including national dialogue processes.

Key questions

This session brings together people involved in dialogue facilitation in different capacities to share experiences and seek answers to the following questions:

- How does gender play out in (allegedly homogenous) same-sex dialogue processes? Examples are called for from, inter alia, unspoken gender role expectations (conflict and interaction styles, societal interest expectations attached to levels local, national, regional as well as questions of representation and constituencies)
- What could inclusive facilitation mean in practical terms? How to overcome 'gender resistance' in process design?
- What does gender-sensitive mediation mean in participants' views?

Composition of the session

Session format: Facilitated roundtable discussion

Facilitator: Ms. Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, Founder & CEO International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), Adjunct Prof Columbia University

Discussants:

- Dr Nada Aswad, A member of the Board of the Syrian Society for Social Development “SSSD”
- Dr Bilqis Abu Osba, Professor of Political Science, Sana’a University; Head of Awam Foundation for Culture and Development
- Mr Hannes Siebert, Senior Advisor, Common Space Initiative, Felm
- *Facilitator: Ms Anna Hess, Senior Programme Officer, ETH Zurich*