Leadership in Mediation: Visibility, Influence and Impact – II edition
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After having completed a first, successful edition in June, the Mediterranean Women Mediator Network (MWMN) decided to offer a second edition of the online course "*Leadership in Mediation: Visibility, Influence and Impact*" designed in partnership with the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) and Durham University.

As with the first edition, the course was conducted by **Fleur Heyworth**, director of the GCSP's executive education, dialogue and policy analysis on Gender and Inclusive Security, and Dr **Catherine Turner**, Associate Professor of International Law at Durham University, UK, and deputy director of the Durham Global Security Institute. Both speakers have a vast expertise in designing trainings on leadership for women and experience in advancing women's participation in mediation processes.[1] The course was moderated by Irene Fellin, head of the MWMN Secretariat.

The course was attended by seven mediators coming from Cyprus, Egypt, Italy, Kosovo, Palestine and the Republic of San Marino. The course has seen the participation of newly admitted MWMN members as well as founding members. The resulting combination of experience, vision and enthusiasm has been a key factor in the success and effectiveness of the course, and has significantly contributed in building connections and provide a valuable variety of perspectives. All participating mediators have expressed their appreciation and gratitude for this learning opportunity.

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1   Fleur, working closely with the Geneva Leadership Alliance, a unique partnership between the Center for Creative Leadership and the GCSP, designs and facilitates courses on gender and leadership for women, and for all leaders to create more inclusive working environments. She is also responsible for the Secretariat of the International Gender Champions (IGC), hosted by GCSP. Catherine has published several academic and policy papers on the subject of advancing women in mediation and is the co-editor of the forthcoming volume *Rethinking Peace Mediation* (Bristol University Press). She also has extensive experience as a practitioner and trainer in mediation and good relations in Northern Ireland. The collaboration between Fleur and Catherine started in 2017 when they united their efforts to produce the strategic security analysis "Women in Mediation: Connecting the Local and Global". See Catherine Turner, "Women in Mediation: Connecting the Local and the Global", in *GCSP Strategic Security Analysis*, No. 5 (August 2017), https://www.gcsp.ch/publications/women-mediation-connecting-local-and-global.

The course was held via Zoom from 24 to 28 August, with a pre-course phase that started on 17 August, during which participants had the opportunity to prepare through relevant readings, videos and podcasts.[2] During this preliminary phase, mediators were also asked to complete a pre-course survey, to assess their preferred influence style through an online tool, and to start reflecting upon their social identities. Mediators were also given access to an online Trello board, which provided an interactive platform for participants to find course materials, post their own contributions,[3] report references, and summarise discussions and conclusions of plenary sessions and group works. The course structure was a combination of facilitator-led plenary sessions and group work. Mediators were assigned readings, personal and group tasks, and were provided with a reflection journal for each session aimed at guiding them through the learning journey.

During the first day (*Introduction, context, objectives*), Fleur and Catherine introduced the goal and meaning of the course by explaining the importance of conscious and effective leadership for women involved in mediation processes. Participants then discussed their expectations for the week and reflected on what behaviours they could adopt to create a safe space and a learning space in the group. With the goal of enhancing individual self-awareness, mediators explored their values and social identities[4] and how

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2   The following were suggested as pre-course readings: Catherine Turner, "Women in Mediation: Connecting the Local and the Global", cit.; Catherine Turner and Fleur Heyworth, "Advancing Inclusive Mediation Through the Lens of Leadership", in *GCSP Strategic Security Analysis*, No. 4, (March 2019), https://www.gcsp.ch/publications/advancing-inclusive-mediation-through-lens-leadership; Catherine Turner, "Soft Ways of Doing Hard Things: Women Mediators and the Question of Gender in Mediation", in *Peacebuilding*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2020), p. 383-401, https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2019.1664369; Fleur Heyworth, "Inspiring Women Leaders: Challenges and Steps for Success", in *GCSP Op-eds*, 18 September 2019, https://www.gcsp.ch/global-insights/inspiring-women-leaders; Catherine Turner, *Mediators and the WPS Agenda*, TJI podcast, 28 February 2020, https://ulster.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=73dc9a21-e10e-4f18-9f48-ab6f00d1640e.

3   Notably, Prof. Maria Hadjipavlou, a member from Cyprus, shared an article she authored on the case of the Cyprus Gender Advisory Team (GAT) as an example of multilevel intervention. Maria is a retired Associate Professor from the University of Cyprus and has written extensively on gender-related issues, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Her book *Women and Change in Cyprus. Feminisms, Gender in Conflict* (London, I.B. Tauris, 2010) became a reference book on women of Cyprus. As a scholar/practitioner, she has cofounded many peacebuilding organisations across the divide, including GAT. In this article, Maria Hadjipavlou and E. Biran Mertan discuss GAT's multilevel linkage strategy (Macro – Meso – Micro) in promoting women's ideas and views on the different issues discussed at the negotiating table, and raising public awareness on GAT's recommendations regarding the issues of governance and power-sharing from a gender and feminist perspective as well as on property, economy, citizenship and education in a federal reunited Cyprus. See Maria Hadjipavlou and E. Biran Mertan, "A Multilevel Intervention: The Case of the Cyprus Gender Advisory Team (GAT) Achievements and Challenges", in *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2019), p. 125-137.

4   Social identity mapping relies on the identification and differentiation between given, chosen and core

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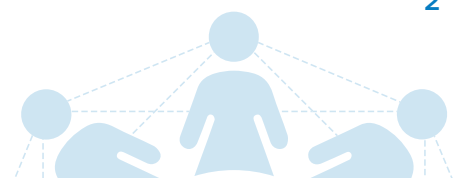
these relate to them as members of the Network. They also addressed and discussed the barriers they, as women, face in mediation and how to reframe and challenge them. The discussion was facilitated by an interactive map describing barriers to women mediators in accessing high-level mediation roles, developed by Catherine following a research project examining the experiences of women working as peace mediators in Northern Ireland in the period 1994–2004.[5] Notably, the most common barriers identified were gendered stereotypes; the "just a girl" attitude towards them as professionals; and the presence of "male gatekeepers" in mediation processes.

The second day (*Processes and roles within mediation and leadership*) was dedicated to understanding mediation as a multi-track process,[6] and how the diversity of roles and skills is a benefit for the MWMN. In particular, mediators and trainers considered the different ways in which women mediators contribute to peace and security. They also discussed the different spaces in which women mediators work and the way in which women's efforts across those different spaces contribute to the overall effectiveness of mediation. Moreover, the concept of leadership as the result of a combination of direction, alignment and commitment (DAC Model) was discussed. *Direction* implies clear goals and the ownership of them, as well as agreement on the criteria used to measure success for the team. *Alignment* requires clarity about each others' roles and responsibilities, as well as a general perception of cooperation and organisation. *Commitment* is based upon passion and professionalism, as well as trust and prioritisation of the common goal. Mediators also reflected on how to define "success" for the Network and identified collective goals.

On the third day (*Building trust and influence*), the unique contribution that women bring to mediation, as well as the skills that contribute to building trust among team members and with stakeholders, were addressed. Using Catherine's publication "Soft Ways of Doing Hard Things: Women Mediators and the Question of Leadership in Mediation" as reference, mediators were invited to think about how their values interact with core principles of mediation (consent, impartiality, confidentiality, inclusivity, norms). Among the identified values there were: achievement, integrity, wisdom, honesty, autonomy, responsibility, creativity, collaboration, compassion, reflection and empathy. Each

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aspects of individual personality and life.

5   Catherine Turner, *That's Beyond You: Barriers to Women Accessing High Level Mediation Roles*, Durham University, 2019, http://barriers-to-women.rethinkingpeacemediation.com.

6   The concept of "multi-track diplomacy" well exemplifies the necessity of operating on multiple levels (from global arenas to local realities) and within multiple scopes now required to effectively prevent and manage contemporary conflicts. As noted by Catherine, "while women are significantly under-represented in 'track one' official mediation, they are better represented in 'track two' unofficial processes, and over-represented at grass roots, or 'track three,' level mediation. It is clear that women bear the burden of mitigating the effects of violence in their own local communities. Yet even the way we talk about tracks implies hierarchy. The 'hard' security approaches of track one are elevated over the 'soft' peacebuilding work that happens at the track three level." See Catherine Turner, "Women's Leadership for Peace: Towards a Model of Multi-Track Leadership", in *IPI Global Observatory*, 18 October 2019, https://theglobalobservatory.org/?p=19798.
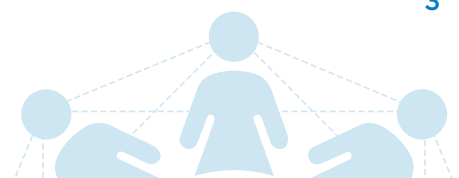
participant provided the group with an explanation and concrete examples on how they apply these values in their work as mediators. Moving from the results of the assessment of their individual preferred influence style (*asserting*, *inspiring*, *bridging*, *negotiating* or *rationalising*),[7] mediators also looked at those areas and attitudes where they need to flex and better adapt. The second part of the day was dedicated to the identification of the stakeholders that the Network should be able to influence to enhance the effectiveness of mediation processes and the best ways to do it. Mediators found that parties to the negotiating tables, political leaders, influential authorities, international actors and target groups depending on relevant topics (human rights issues, gender issues, socio-economic issues, criminality-related issues, etc.) are the stakeholders to be influenced. They also found that enhancing transparency and inclusiveness, favouring dialogue also through informal channels, and building bridges between partiesare good strategies to build better mediation processes. They also acknowledged that the lack of political will, the tension between transparency and confidentiality, the mistrust and prejudices against the mediator's impartiality and patriarchal norms are all barriers that prevent the achievement of said goal. Mediators also recognised the importance of storytelling, role modelling and effective communication as valuable ways to influence the perception of the role of women as mediators.

On day four (*Leading tensions*), participants discussed the perceptions, conflict and tensions characterising mediation, and they also reflected on their personal triggers. Moving from the assumption that our values are a strength, but they also affect our interactions with others and the reality around us, mediators were invited to reflect on how their own values impact their role in mediation, particularly in those instances in which they are confronted with different and contrasting sets of values. Mediators thus reflected on which subjects they find difficult to engage with and which characteristics they find difficult to work with. The second part of the day focussed on the concept of "polarity thinking" as a tool to manage tensions and leverage strategic polarities to reach a greater purpose. A Polarity Map[8] can be an extremely valuable tool to stimulate a different approach in managing differences, contrasts and contradictions within mediation processes. By examining the often-contrasting interests and forces involved in mediation processes as examples of persisting polarities and by putting them in relation to those characterising leadership, mediators learned how to apply the Polarity Map to their own activities. Through the application of "polarity lens", Fleur and Catherine helped

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7 See Psysoft website: *Influence Style Indicator*, https://www.psysoft.com/influence-style-indicator. The Indicator tool describes the styles as follows: "Asserting: You advocate by debate, insisting your ideas are heard and challenging the ideas of others; Inspiring: You advocate by presenting a sense of shared purpose and exciting possibilities; Bridging: You advocate by connecting, building relationships and coalitions; Negotiating: You advocate through comparisons, concessions and trade-offs to reach outcomes that satisfy your greater interest; Rationalising: You advocate by offering logic, rational reasons and data".

8 For more references on polarity maps and polarity thinking see the Polarity Partnerships website: https://www.polaritypartnerships.com.
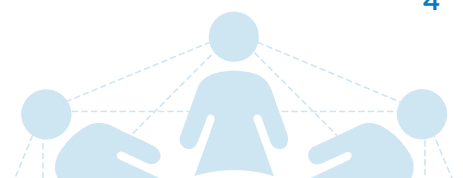
mediators in seeing systemic and personal tensions and knowing how to manage and lead them. They also provided advice on how to conduct constructive and courageous conversations.

Lastly, after a quick recap of the topics addressed during the course, mediators focussed on identifying their personal and collective goals for the MWMN and reflected upon the contribution each of them could bring. Among these, mediators identified the following: improving and expanding the Network's outreach and advocacy activities by preparing a strategic plan with actionable aspects and building stable channels with relevant international organisations; and organising Working Groups based on expertise to draft and implement actions and activities. Mediators, facilitated by Fleur and Catherine, also visualised their commitment to the Network by preparing a word cloud. The most recurrent values representing their membership and the way forward are: collaboration, leadership, advocacy, safety, inclusiveness, safety and assertiveness.

All participating mediators have expressed appreciation for the course's content and structure, noting the good combination between individual, group and plenary sessions, which allowed them to link their own personal considerations and experiences to theoretical aspects. Despite the distance that the global pandemic has put between us, forcing the Secretariat and trainers to reshape the course in virtual form, mediators have found that the course has proved to be a great learning experience and a bonding opportunity between newly admitted and more experienced members of the Network. All participating mediators said that they would recommend the course to other Network members.

With a view to fostering leadership and advancing the Network's mission, the MWMN Secretariat is committed to continue offering learning and training opportunities to its members.
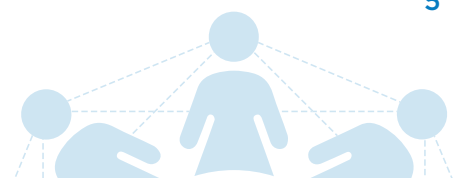
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