

# A BRIEF PERSPECTIVE ON THE ABIC - WSR



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## WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP, PARTICIPATION IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND MANAGEMENT

### INTRODUCTION

The Angie Brooks International Centre (ABIC), ABIC is a direct outcome of the 2009 International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security, held in 2009 in Monrovia, Liberia, which was co-convened in Liberia under the Presidencies of Taja Halonen of Finland and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia.

ABIC responds to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on the subject of Women's Involvement in the promotion of peace and security, throughout the African Continent under the Centre's Flagship product the innovative Women's Situation Room (WSR) which has received accolades from all quarters, including the UN Security Council and the African Union, amongst others. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is the Champion of the Room



*Co-conveners President Sirleaf Johnson and President Tarja Halonen of Finland, with Ms. Gadhaifi, President Adoul Wade of Senegal and President Paul Kagame of Rwanda*

## SUCCESSFUL RESULTS/ OUTCOMES

First initiated with the support of UNDP in Liberia during the 2011 Presidential and Legislative election under Dominic Sam as UNDP Country Director, the Women Situation Room (WSR) has been adapted and replicated in 11 times in seven countries all under the auspices of Angie Brooks International Centre giving its technical support. As each WSR has been implemented, it has brought on lessons learned to the WSR that has become of the WSR peace process. Some notable achievements are:

**KENYA 2013** - The WSR-Kenya team of Eminent Women Mediators held three meetings with Raila Odinga, Leader of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) the main opposition party. The women mediators were able to get a commitment from him that if he had issues with the election results, he would seek legal redress in the Courts instead of resorting to protests and violence. And that he would accept the court's ruling. ABIC was in Kenya when Mr. Odinga and his party went to court after the polls and witnessed his acceptance of the court's ruling upholding the elections results.

**UGANDA 2016** - The Eminent Women Mediators were asked to mediate between the President and the main opposition leader thereby preventing violent confrontations in post-elections Uganda. They are an essential part of the ongoing National Dialogue process in Uganda.

**GHANA 2016** - The WSR mediated the first Youth Gang Summit for peaceful elections in the world, and the signing of the peace commitment by leaders of gang groups from disenfranchised and disadvantaged communities, slums and ghettos. Leaders of the gang groups worked tirelessly with the WSR to prevent violence in their electoral areas, especially after the closing of polls, during the vote count and after the results were announced.

**SIERRA LEONE 2018** - The Eminent Women Mediators intervened and resolved a standoff between the Flagbearer of the SLPP and the Police which would have led to violence; The WSR engaged International Elections Observer Missions and diplomats to mediate in an impasse between the two political parties and the National Elections Commission before runoff elections could be held.

**NIGERIA 2015** - In 2015, Nigeria became the fourth country to replicate the concept of the Women's Situation Room. The ABIC spearheaded the replication process that witnessed the involvement of not just the women of Nigeria but also the participation of experienced Eminent Women from across the continent. The Room hosted a number of distinguished personalities including the US Under Secretary of State for West and Central Africa, H.E. Linda Thomas Greenfield, Prof. Dr. Amos Sawyer, Head of the AU Mission, Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, SRSG and Head of UNOWAS, Professor Attahiru Muhammadu Jega, Chairman of the Independent National Elections Commission (INEC) in Nigeria and H.E. William Awinador Kanyirige - Ghana High Commissioner to the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Permanent Representative to ECOWAS, amongst others. It was also in Nigeria that the WSR started in the Room the establishment of specialised Intervention Desks including the Police, INEC etc which has further strengthened the WSR peace process.

**LIBERIA 2017** - The WSR organised Civic education on the interpretation of the Court Injunction which calmed the populace till injunction was lifted and runoff elections held on 26th December 2017. Liberia also held the first gang youth march for peaceful elections. The WSR in partnership with Female Lawyers of Liberia trained Elections Magistrates to ensure speedy adjudication of elections cases. The Eminent Women Mediators mediated between the youth in political parties and the Police/NEC thus averting violent confrontation before the runoff elections.

## APPRECIATIONS OF THE WOMEN'S SITUATION ROOM (WSR)

The significance and appreciation of the work of the Women Situation Room by several Partners and Institutions are presented below:

### The Commonwealth Secretariat Observer Group at the Ugandan Elections

"The Group commends the Women's Situation Room, a valuable mechanism to monitor potential hotspots, incident of violence, harassment and intimidation. Women are our natural peacemakers, and I commend the eminent women observers from across the African continent and all Ugandans involved for undertaking the important task."

H.E Olusegun Obasanjo  
Former President of Nigeria

Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group at the 2016 Election in Uganda.



### African Women Development Fund (AWDF)

The African Women Development Fund (AWDF) has financed various delegations of youth and Eminent Women to bring their expertise and rich knowledge in rolling out the process to ensure peace before, during and after elections, in multiple countries including Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The AWDF sponsored the first ever Youth Gang Summit during elections in the history of the world, during the 2016 elections in Ghana. This summit brought together diverse youth from two Mano River Union countries; Liberia and Sierra Leone, to bring their experience to support the youth in Ghana. This was a milestone of the WSR in ensuring that it is committed to building a network of youth peace activists across the sub region. At the same time the ECOWAS as well as the UN Office of the Secretary General in West Africa and the Sahel financed the participation of youth.

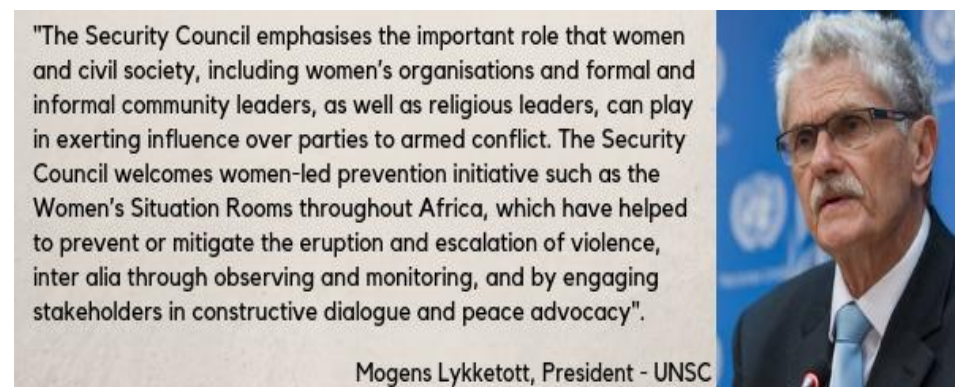
The AWDF was also strategic in supporting African Eminent Women to the Situation Room in Sierra Leone during the 2018 elections in these activities.

### UN Security Council acknowledges the work of WSR

At the 7717 meeting of the United Nations Security Council held on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2016 in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "Women and peace



security” , the statement of the President of the Security Council, Mogens Lykettott, highlighted the Women’s Situation Room and acknowledged how it has helped to prevent mitigate the eruption and escalation of violence, interracial through observing and monitoring and by engaging stakeholders in constructive dialogue and peace advocacy. Excerpt of the President of the Security Council’s statement is as follows:



#### UN Resident Coordinator - Ghana

The UN Resident Coordinator in Ghana, Ms. Christine Evans-Klock, put this initiative for peaceful and inclusive elections in Ghana in perspective. She reminded the Ghanaian gathering that it was the recognition of the vital role women play as proven agents of change in achieving and sustaining peace, that the UN Security Council in 2000 had passed its historic resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. It calls for women to participate in peacebuilding and in ensuring peaceful elections. By choosing to use the Women’s Situation Room mechanism to promote peaceful elections, Ghanaian women were fulfilling one of the aspirations of this UN Security Council Resolution.

The WSR rallies women, youth, religious and traditional leaders and institutions, media, and development partners to ensure a peaceful electoral process which empowers women to exercise their civil rights and influence the pathways of their nations. Some 10,000 people joined the march for peace, from women’s group, youth organization, and women leader of the various political parties across all 10 regions of the country. The success of the WSR as a powerful peacebuilding platform led to its adoption by women leaders and elders in Ghana.



*The women leaders of the WSR Ghana*

#### Norwegian Embassy – Ghana Funder of WSR in Ghana; Sierra Leone & Liberia



The Norwegian Embassy in Ghana had the privilege of working with Women’s Situation Room during the elections in Ghana in 2016, Liberia in 2017, and Sierra Leone in 2018. WSR played a key role in preventing election related violence in all three countries, and where violence occurred often managed to contain and solve the issues. Women and children are the most vulnerable in times of instability and violence. Hence it is vital that they are actively included to play their key pivotal role in sustaining peace. WSR has a unique set-up where main stakeholders, including security forces, share offices and engage in active dialogue with communities and groups. Through these broad networks and through the engagement of women and youth, WSR has been able to mobilize fast in local communities and grass root levels to curb violence and prevent it from spreading. The WSR chapter is a successful example of the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women peace and security from several countries in West Africa.

## United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS)

UNOWAS, under the leadership of H.E. Dr. Ibn Chambas continues to be one of the major sponsors of the ECOWAS Youth solidarity Mission for the WSR. Dr. Chambas also continues to grace the Youth Room with his presence to engage with the gangs in countries where the WSR has been replicated.



*Dr. Chambas paid a courtesy call to engage with the Youth in Ghana*

## Conclusions

Under the championship of the WSR, as designated by the African Union, the innovation of the Women's Situation Room actually gave "teeth" to the UNSCR 1325 not only for Liberian women but for women throughout the African Continent, to the extent that other regions are asking for its replication.

Particular appreciation is owed to the various partners for their support to ABIC and the Women's Situation Room in particular - while its Champion proved the power behind its success and extraordinary women. Key among the partners were the UN System - notably UNDP; UNFPA; UNMIL; UNITAR; ECOWAS; UNOWAS; UN Women; Government of Norway; African Women Development Fund and Urgent Action Fund.

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**Peace is in our Hands!**

