



Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism WhatsApp Workshop Seminar

Series 6

Conversation with Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda

African Traditional Mechanisms - 5 Stages of Mediation

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The Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism - Africa (CVPP) is a non-profit network that builds the capacities of women and other groups in preventing, transforming and solving violent conflict through a Peace and Pluralism approach. CVPP- Africa equips women to contribute to peace processes in decision making roles.

The WhatsApp Workshop Seminar Series began in the wake of the Global COVID-19 Pandemic. The Pandemic has hit the world's vulnerable and most marginalized hardest. These are the people members of CVPP work with. Members of CVPP decided to meet this unprecedented challenge by speaking to each other every week. Sharing stories, learning new skills from each other all through the WhatsApp platform, to enable reach to those of our members without access to facilities such as Zoom or Skype.

Convener: Alice Wairimu Nderitu, mediator of armed conflict and author

Coordinator: Regina Mutiru, Mentor and Founding Partner at Amani Women Network

Moderator: Mireille Tushiminina, Country Program Manager at UN Women, Burundi

Panelist: Stella Mystica Sabiiti, UN Women Advisor to the African Union (AU)'s Network of Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa)

Seminar Series Coordinator & Rapporteur: Shama Shah, conflict analyst

Participants: Members of Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism Africa

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Alice Nderitu, Kenya; Convener's introduction of the workshop seminar: Good afternoon everyone and hope all is fine wherever you are all over our beautiful continent and beyond!!

This afternoon, we listen to one of our Continental Greats Mama Stella of Uganda but really of Africa. She doesn't need any introduction to many of us. She is a Continental peace waking Icon.

She gave us the name *Peace Wakers* and today she will wake the peace.

She already sent us a presentation, becoming the first person to prepare a PowerPoint for this amazing Saturday WhatsApp conversation.

She will be moderated by another great, Mireille of DRC.

We have seen their bios which are in themselves topics of discussion.

Thank you, Mama Stella, thank you Mireille.

I am now handing over to Mireille to continue with the moderation and inviting all of us to engage. Remember we engage on the basis of before we give feedback, we ask whether it's kind, true or necessary.

With much appreciation sisters and three brothers!

Peace, Rain, Prosperity!

Mireille Tushiminina, Democratic Republic of Congo: Many thanks, Alice for the kind introduction. Greetings everyone, I am incredibly honored to be moderating today's session with the one and only Stella M. Sabiiti (Wait... give me a second to check off my bucket list before I continue).

I am back now, Stella is a mentor to many, a polyglot, with an incredible track record and lastly, Stella is very, very influential in gender mainstreaming and mediation within the peace-building

process in Africa. As her career and accomplishments show clearly, indeed she has made the kind of impact she said she would and is set to achieve more. I have no doubt we will benefit immensely from this session.

Good afternoon Stella and thank you for sharing "our very 1st PPT" WhatsApp presentation. We are all ears, and ready to learn about you as a person, your journey to peacebuilding, and the Five Stages of Mediation in the African traditional context.

Can you please tell us about yourself - Who is Stella Sabiiti? How did you become the "Peace Crusader" and a Pan Africanist?

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: Good afternoon dear sisters and brothers.

I was a student at the University, and I married quite early, but I promised myself that once I survived the ordeal that I had gone through, I would work with armed groups. So for almost 40 years I have been working with armed groups and governments across the world. Now I am at a policy making level, but my policy making work is enriched by my experiences on the ground. I very much love working with communities, you know. I don't enjoy policy making very much, but I think my role is to do quality checks of the policies that are made and weigh them against the reality on the ground to make some corrections and suggestions.

So, because I work with communities and because most of us have lived more than half our lives in turmoil because of political turmoil, we've had to learn how to manage. What we don't see when we see violence in families is we don't relate it to the larger context, which is the political context, which is brought on us (for example Africa) by slavery, by colonialism and even neo-colonialism. We don't relate them to violence, but those things are completely and utterly connected. If we want to unpack this, we have to use the lenses that focus on the small picture, but also, very importantly, on the larger picture. And because of that, I have seen, even in my own personal life, what role family members (especially the clan of my husband) play in helping us live a good life as a married couple, as husband and wife and as children. I open my eyes because I am also a journalist and I have looked around with those lenses and I believe what guides me is true, that people who do harm to others don't have any other way, or they didn't learn any other way. They feel that 'if I am harmed, I have to harm others, and that way I am protecting myself and my family, my loved ones'. I think our job as peace-workers/ peacemakers is not really to make judgement but to help each other and others. I have seen *fantastic* things that happen once we do that.

Coming into the meat of the subject, which is indigenous or traditional mechanisms in dealing with conflict on the African continent, we first need to understand the wider context of preventing, managing and resolving the conflict, and of course transforming the conflict to then have reconciliation. The African culture, in all the different tribes and ethnic groups, if you were to pause and think and reflect, you see that your neighbor becomes your family. Maybe some of you grew up in the city so you are not sure what goes on in your tribes, but you can see, even in

the city, your neighbor immediately becomes your family. The neighbor is never a stranger. So in the African cultural context, everyone is connected to everyone, and for those of you who know about sewing, knitting or weaving, we have 2 types of threads that form a fabric of a cloth or material – the one running up and down through a straight vertical line is the warp, and then from left to right crossing that warp is the weft. So you have many lines going from down to up as the warp and the symbolism of that in Africa is the relationship between every individual on this earth to their God who gives life (Allah, Rohanga, Katonda, you can put it in any language). That is the source of life that we are all connected to directly. The power of God, or The Creator (whatever you believe created you) comes through the ancestors, through the relatives, through your family, to you, *through* you to your children and into the future. That is the warp. Every family has that line, every member has that line connecting them directly from God to themselves and into the future. Then the weft from the left to the right which is the relationships we now build as human beings on this earth. So my neighbor is actually my relative, we share together, we care about each other – it's a larger community, and that is our context. This forms a very good basis, not only for conflict prevention but also resolution and transformation.

I know that all of us on this platform are peacebuilders, peace workers, conflict transformers conflict preventers, and we are all doing a good job, each one of us, at our own different levels. Some of you might have come across the work of someone called William Ury or Bill Ury, he's the one who wrote the book, "Getting to Yes", "Getting Past No" and "Getting to Peace", and he's written many others since then. We are good colleagues and we go back many, many years since the mid-90s. He has identified some things he calls Factors. In order to succeed in peace, you have certain factors that encourage peace building, especially when you're trying to resolve the conflict. There are factors that make it fail, that make you fail (you could have all the best of intentions, but then there are certain things that will block you). It's good to know these factors and I'm relating them to the African indigenous mechanisms.

In order to succeed in peace, you have to be *interdependent* if you are independent of each other, if you don't see any connectedness, you will not succeed. So that issue of interdependence is at the center of the African culture; that no one is independent of the other. Many times we are criticized for forgetting the individual, and looking at the community, but you can't have a community without the individual. You can't have a forest, a good, healthy forest with green leaves and flowers, with bees and insects etc. You can't have that if the individual trees are not all right. So the system makes sure that we take care of the individuals who contribute to the larger tree. So we are all interdependent. We don't have alternative means of dealing with a conflict; if we have a conflict, we have to stay in it and find a solution. Some of you have heard of The BATNA (Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement) by William Ury. In African culture, it's automatic, it's there - no one will allow anyone who has committed a crime or has done wrong to get away with it. You have to stay in the situation and find a solution.

The other factor is that you have *reasonable time pressure*. In Africa, we say that the Western world has the watches and the clocks. For us, we have The Time. We have to create enough time to deal with the situation, we don't just leave it hanging and say 'we'll come to it next year', 'let's

just sign this and that', etc. No, we've got to dig deep and deal with it. And also, if all the parties in a conflict have a support system and you're all showing a willingness to find a solution that is exemplified in the African culture.

We have what we call *barriers*, so we know that in a conflict situation with all the best of intentions, what we want to do is to sit together and find a solution jointly. This is what we do, in the African sense. It's not one person standing with another - the whole family and the whole community is involved, and they are all in the open so that there is enough space for everyone to be involved in finding a solution. If one person commits a crime or does something wrong, they are also implicating their own family, their relatives and their community. That's why it becomes the responsibility of everybody else to find a solution. I think you've heard of the saying, "it takes a village to raise a child". It's true, it's really true. Go to any community, either in the city or in the villages, everybody is concerned, everybody knows everyone in those close-knit communities. And I'd like to add that some of these things, which are African, are really common sense. I lived many years in the Netherlands, and I discovered about three different white communities who applied the same concept (I can't remember the system and even if I did, it would be in Dutch). They decided they wanted to live together, so they came from around the country and they identified a certain neighborhood where new houses were being built and they move in as a community. Each family has its own home, but they don't close the doors. The children play in each other's compound and they share meals. They are saying they are trying to go back to the original. So what we call indigenous in Africa is indigenous to every human being on this earth.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria: How do you manage to stay focused considering the political intrigues involved in working with armed groups?

Mireille Tushiminina, Democratic Republic of Congo: You are being too humble. You are such an inspiring "Peace Icon", a woman of substance, and your powerful story should never be forgotten. Unfortunately, we missed the genesis, especially while you were a student during the Amin regime, and since I love visuals, I am sharing this fascinating video about the moment that changed your life (<https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/2017/03/21/moment-changed-life/>).

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: In order to find a solution, you want to sit together side by side to find mutually satisfactory agreement which is what you're aiming for in a conflict situation anywhere in the world. But there are 5 barriers which were mentioned, and sometimes when you are in a conflict situation with someone else, you react. For example, if someone did something violent to you, you feel like taking revenge (and by the way, revenge gives you immediate satisfaction. That's why everybody goes for revenge). But by reacting like that, using violence against violence to resolve violence, you will end up causing more harm than good. And then also, at the same time, there's a lot of emotion on the other side as well. For instance, the party that you're in a conflict with, as I said earlier, may not be aware that they have alternative means of dealing with the conflict because they learned that 'you hit me, I hit you, because if I don't hit

you, you will hit me even worse, and then I will lose'. Nobody wants to lose. And we have a phrase which says, 'eat or be eaten'. So, I want to be the first one to eat you before you eat me.

And so those are the barriers that will prevent us from sitting down to find a solution. Some of them have learnt about power and they want to dig into their position. They don't want to move. As mediators, this is what we come across because parties in a conflict have so much emotion, they are so hurt, they are so afraid, they are not so sure about anything...they dig inside themselves and they try to get the resources for that, and most of the resources that are reachable are the negative ones. To get the positive resources inside you as an individual, as a family, as a community, in your place of work, as a country, as the world, you really have to think! You have to think, and the solutions are there.

We also find that sometimes when you come up with a solution, the other party will not accept because they feel they should have been the first ones to give a solution. So the role of a mediator or the third party is to make sure that all these things are balanced so that the parties can sit together and find those solutions I mentioned earlier.

Then there is a breakthrough strategy. So, I said we all want to sit together, find a solution, but then we have these obstacles in the way. But there are *always* ways of finding solutions. The solutions are always there. The ones I've trained always know that I say, 'for everyone problem, there are a million solutions, good solutions. So, if you look, you'll find them - they will not bring themselves - they are waiting for you to reach them.

One of the ways to break through these barriers is to view them at a distance. So, you remove yourself from the situation (the violent situation) so that you can think clearly, because when you're not thinking clearly, because of the emotions, the fear and so on, you are most likely going to do more harm than good. So, view it from a distance, and relate it to the African culture. In some ethnic communities, when a person from their family, from their clan commits a crime, the first thing the people do is get that person and hide the person at the home of their mother. This is where the mother comes from, which by nature, in our African cultures, is not where the father comes from. The mother is married from somewhere else and brought into this home and she gives birth and her children are brought up in the father's family. So, if one of these children were to commit some crime, the first thing the family does is to get this person (it could be a child, could be a youth, could be a young man or a young woman) and take this person to the family of the mother, which is far away, in terms of distance. This is not to hide the person, because in our culture we have the do's and don'ts and proverbs and other things that teach us what to do, and some of these cultural behaviors are that if a child goes back to the side of the mother, that child is free to do anything. They can pick a goat, a chicken, they are free, and no one will beat them up. You are really welcomed, you are hugged, you are embraced, and you are given the best food and drink. So that's the place which is a safe place. The job of the mother's family is to make the person realize that what they did was wrong and that what they did impacted negatively on the family, on the clan, sometimes even on the village. So, their job is to create that good, nice, calm atmosphere, to ask this person to admit the wrong they did.

Okay ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters, I really don't know if you can hear me, but no worries, we still have next time.

Another way to break away from those roadblocks, the barriers, is to learn to get yourself into the shoes of the other person that you have hurt. And all that in the African culture is done – there are rituals, there are dances. there are all sorts of things to help one understand how the other party is hurting.

Meanwhile, the family and clan and so on of the family that has been harmed, that has been hurt, the first thing they do is get hold of their young men, because remember people, it's the young men that are the protective system for any community, any family. I mean, just look on TV now on CNN – it's the young people who are on the streets. We always talk about women and girls suffering most in conflict, but we have to make this very clear that people who suffer most are the ones who are holding their weapons to protect their own people, because they are seen as an enemy from the other side, the opposite side. So those are the first ones who suffer; in COVID-19, we see the nurses, the doctors and so on and so forth. It's the same in everyday life, in our work, in our homes, in our families. So, what I'm saying that this is not something from long ago, it is happening right now. The members of the family that has been harmed get their young men to sit and they tell them, 'sit down, guys. Sit down. Let's talk. Don't go for revenge. Let's sit and talk'. Meanwhile, they're buying time, giving enough time for the family of the person who has committed the crime or the atrocity to get sense into this person to admit the crime that they have done.

Mireille Tushiminina, Democratic Republic of Congo: Over the years Stella has developed a comprehensive approach to conflict transformation, grounded in her personal experience of war and torture, and a life spent as a refugee on three continents. Please Stella, feel free to dive into your presentation as well. I know many are eager to ask questions. We are all ears.

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: The issue of saving face. Saving face. I remember in Uganda when the Lord's Resistance Army of Joseph Kony broke out, I was already back in Uganda. I was working internationally but based in Uganda. The government would only say, 'no, there is no rebel group. It doesn't exist. They are just thugs. They're just running around and, you know, they're thieves. They are not a rebel group, so we cannot talk to them'. We as civil society at the time worked so hard to give evidence to the government to show them that people are actually being harmed. They're being harmed. Something has to happen. Something positive has to be done by the government. And the government for a long time refused to listen, saying, no, that group doesn't exist. Eventually in the end they accepted, but it was difficult for them after having declared openly every day that the group doesn't exist for them to come and say, 'oh, yeah, it's there'. That was very difficult. So, for us, we're working on peace at the time, we were working with the government to make sure that they don't lose face, that we help them save face. Because you do that, you are actually saving humanity.

And so, the government acknowledged the Lord's Resistance Army existed, but were not going to negotiate with them. They didn't want to do any of that. And meanwhile, people were dying because the government were still fearing to lose face. Eventually they agreed, however they were threatening and said if they heard anyone was working with the Lord's Resistance Army either for peace or whatever, they would arrest them because they would identify your name with the group. Then we had to work against that and eventually the government put out a notice and said, if anyone wants to work with then the rebel group and bring them back or find peace, you had their blessing. Then the next step, the government said they actually had the resources and they would provide funds to civil societies, religious groups, community leaders and others. They would facilitate dialogue with the rebel group. And before you knew it there were peace talks. All of you must have heard of Betty Bigombe, she was there as a mediator. She worked under very difficult circumstances. I mean, this is long ago before you saw women being mediators. And she managed to do a very good job according to the circumstances of the time. So, you can see the stages that the government went through and we hoped for the government not to lose face, but to save face.

We always say that since all these parties in a conflict have a lot of power, it's actually a power game that they want to win. They don't want to lose and to be seen as hopeless. And so for us, we are there to make sure that people come together and the solution is found.

Going back to the African indigenous mechanisms in that place where the Lord's Resistance comes from in Northern Uganda. They have their own indigenous mechanisms of dealing with conflict. Some of you might be asking yourselves, maybe these things happen during the time of our great grandparents and before that, not now. Well, the mato oput in Acholi, in the place where the Lord's Resistance Army comes from, they went through that because they thought how do you deal with such a large group of people that have caused so much suffering? The people, the communities that were suffering most were the first ones to approach the government and say, we forgive. These are our sons, our uncles and so on. They're doing this. We have our own system of dealing with this and we'll do it. And that is not for people to go with impunity. It is not about impunity. And I think we have our Sister Mary, on this platform from Rwanda. She will tell you about the gacaca system after the genocide. There was no way they could prosecute everyone who was involved in the Genocide, so they had to resort now to the indigenous mechanisms. For me, in 1976, I was appointed as one of the mediators for that group that abducted me. I was appointed as a mediator 26 years after the torture. Neither the government nor the rebel groups nor *anyone* knew I was that young girl that they nearly killed. And I am appointed to take them through the path of peace to find peace. By the way, we said peace is what happens on the way, it is not just what you get at the end of a process. Every step you take, you're walking and experiencing peace. So, I had the honor to be put in front of the people who nearly killed me twenty-six years earlier. And this is now was in 2002 when I was that so-called 'expert'. That experience really to me proved the things that I already knew. And because, again, those were early days in these peace processes, I was left alone. I don't know if it's because the people who appointed me didn't believe in this and they said 'let's train women. Let's see'. I don't know. But I went in and as I said the other day on this platform, I remember on that small

plane flying there because you couldn't go by road because of the violence. This is west in the western part of northern Uganda, near South Sudan and the eastern Congo. And I went on that tiny little plane and I remember writing in my notebook. I said, 'God, I'm so empty. I don't know what I'm going to do, but it's you going to do it. God, you're the one going to do it for me. I'm just going to be the voice'.

That experience showed me the power of the African community, the connectedness. We gathered, all the women who were in one way or another connected to this conflict. This is now in West Nile. Not the Lord's Resistance Army, but West Nile. The part where Idi Amin came from. So, these were soldiers of Amin who had mobilized themselves over the years into rebel groups and they were attacking. So, there was a lot of chaos around that time. Eastern Congo was on fire, Southern Sudan was on fire, Northern Uganda, Northwestern Uganda. I mean, the whole Great Lakes region and Horn of Africa was on fire. So, we mobilized the women. I knew them because I was working there. I would be invited to train. We had the youth. We had all the faith. In Uganda, you have to have the Muslim, Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Seventh Day, and the Bahá'í you have to have those religious leaders at any public function.

And then we had traditional leaders - the real chiefs, those ones, the ones you know, the ones you see in pictures and so on, they were there. And some of them are also women. So, this thing of saying women are not involved in these processes is because we are looking at it with different lenses, because we think that the arena for solving a problem is where the public eye is, and we forget what goes on behind the scenes. That's how it used to work. But now we are saying the arena has changed. It's now in the public space for everyone. So, open up the space. So that's why we're talking about inclusivity. Let the women not advice from the back but let them also be there. Let the youth and children come in front. By the way, children used to play a very big role traditionally. They still do in traditional communities that we have on our continent. If a child steps between fighters, either mother and father or neighbors or any fighters, the fighters have to lay down their arms. Those are the rules of engagement. If a woman opened her skirt, or threatened to open it, all the fighters would put down their arms. That's an African way of preventing or resolving a conflict.

I think it's time for questions.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria: Thank you very much for this very elaborate session. Very enriching. How were you able to make warring parties shift their positions considering how rigid they are in sticking to what they believed in?

Nimo Ali, Somaliland/Kenya: Thank you, Stella. I have learned so much, I am so inspired.

Mireille Tushiminina, Democratic Republic of Congo: Thank you so much, Stella, an absolutely inspiring and rich session. The floor is now open for questions and comments. Let's take full advantage of Stella.

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: Perhaps I can wrap up by talking about reconciliation.

First it's making the person/ group who has committed the crime admit that they did it. They are convinced by their families that it is really in everyone's best interest that they own up.

Then they come in the open (Africans choose the open because there is the nature and many of them, when they are doing reconciliation and they have some blessed water or some food or something to signify that we have resolved the conflict) and they always call upon the rocks, the mountains, the rivers, the rapids or waterfalls. They call upon a part of nature that that will outlive us. And that part of nature is supposed to be the witness, the witness to this peace process, the witness of what has happened and the witness of what the parties have agreed to. This is the equivalent of the peace agreement traditionally or indeed by indigenous methods on the African continent. And by the way, beyond the African continent, when our people were taken from Africa and were distributed around the world, they still have those methods. I am very happy because I work with some of those groups. I also work with indigenous communities around the world (in Canada, in the U.S. and others), and most of the universities I lecture at ask me to talk about African indigenous mechanisms. At the end when we are taking group photographs, I hear them saying, 'ubuntu!', 'mato oput!', 'gacaca!', 'xotla!'. It's a very popular subject, really. And then some of the Western students who are there dug up how it used to be done before what we call the "Western methods." Really what we see today is what was what was crafted recently in the whole scheme of things of life on Earth. Otherwise, indigenously, all the people had these positive things. We know these negative ones in every culture. We are highlighting the positive ones.

Fatima Maiga, Mali: Thanks Stella. Can indigenous conflict resolution systems work in "internationalized" conflicts, especially those involving terrorist groups? What is your experience in this setting?

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: I see a question about helping parties shift positions. You know, as I said earlier, human beings read human beings. If you come in as a mediator or as a third party playing whatever role to bring the conflicting parties together, they feel you, they sense you... and sometimes they threaten you. So, it's not an easy thing. I was almost kidnapped by the same people that I was mediating. During the day, I would be with the rebel groups, with those community people I have mentioned, with the government and the military, they were all there. And in the night, the government would go behind my back and negotiate with the rebel leaders. And I wasn't aware. But in the morning, as I start a session, I feel I'm lost wondering how come we are not picking up. I could feel the energy of last evening is not the same energy this morning. And that's because sometimes when the powerful want to use their power behind your back as a person leading the process, you will not know. And it can even lead to very terrible consequences for you as a third party. And I was able to deal with it. It's a long story, really. I can't tell it now. It's a very long story. But since we're on the same platform, I mean, I can share some things with you.

You have to show that you *believe* in the people. You have to show that you believe in the parties. And even if they tell lies (they have so many lies to tell). They have so many tricks either on you, on each other or whatever. I mean, really, there is so much. But if you walk in looking at them as horrible people who have committed horrible things, you will not make a way out of this jungle. What guides me is that these are human beings like me. I see myself in them and I see them in me. And I wonder if I were pushed in a corner maybe to protect my children, what horrible things might I be able to do? That's why I don't want to judge. But I look at the human beings as fantastic, and my job is to help them realize that fantastic, fantastic way. So once they see that, what's remaining is to gain trust and confidence from the parties, they have to have that in you. If they don't have it in you, they will not shift their position. I can say this. But this question is about this particular group that I've just shared the experience with you. The government was way more powerful than the rebel group, of course. It's only Sri Lanka where I know the rebel group was more powerful than the government. Sorry about that, but that's how it was at that time. They had their own army. They had their own air force. They had their own everything. What the government had, they also had in Sri Lanka. But now this was Uganda and in most of our countries, the governments are more powerful. The military, they have all the resources. So how do you make a level ground? So, I asked for time from the government that the negotiating party to work with the rebel groups by themselves. I had to negotiate that and in mediation and negotiation processes, that's called caucusing (when you take aside one party or one of the many parties and you work with them separately). That way you are trying to help them, because when they are together in the same room, they will never analyze the situation very well and reveal the things they need to reveal. They will always want to threaten each other. Just to wrap up on that group after they gained confidence and trust in me after many days, at the end of the day, one of them came to me and held out his hand and said, 'Mama Stella, Mama Stella. Thank you!'. And I felt in his hand he had a piece of paper and I could tell that this was supposed to be a secret message. So, I hid it in my dress when I was in my room, nicely secured, I opened the paper and it was a list of new demands. And these were completely different demands from the ones we'd been working with, with all the parties, but now because they'd gained trust in me, they were able to share with me that true things. And the following day I said, 'but guys, what is this? You know you're going to go back to war if you're hiding information'. And they said, 'no, no, no. You know, we are very trained, and we are seasoned fighters. We know all the tricks of the game and what we will do is just slap this new list on the table. The government will shake, and it will give us what we want'. Of course, dear brothers and sisters, you know, that doesn't work. So, we had to go through the new list and gradually I brought them out of their positions (the government also had its own position). I worked with both parties and they came together.

Mireille Tushiminina, Democratic Republic of Congo: Q2) How do you manage to stay focused considering the political intrigues involved in working with armed groups?

Q3) Can indigenous conflict resolution systems work in "internationalized" conflicts, especially those involving terrorist groups? What is your experience in this setting?

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: There is a question about using indigenous mechanisms in internationalized conflicts such as terrorist groups. You know, I've worked with some of these people and they look at us, a young guy holding a gun with a terrifying looking mask, he will eventually come to you. This has happened to me in Thailand, Southern Thailand, where they are now fighting to break away from the main country, Thailand. There they are Malay, they are Muslim. They want to belong to Malaysia, so they are blowing themselves up. And I was with this group and I could see the boys looking at me. And during one of the breaks I went to one as a mother (as a human being, really) and I said, give me a hug. I forgot there were Muslims and they are not allowed to hug a woman in public. And then one of them said, 'no, no, no, no'. Then another one came running, said, 'I don't care. Please hug me, hug me, give me a hug!'. And we both cried.

So, what I'm saying is that the things which are indigenous are not necessarily African, it's just common sense. Is that great heart that all of us were born with. You just let it shine and the moment you let it shine, it will break all sorts of barriers, yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Sometimes what is a challenge in these internationalized conflicts with terrorism is the issue of drugs. When fighters use drugs, it blocks that 'humanness' in them. But once in a while, the light shines through. So, our struggle for peace goes beyond bringing parties together and living together with each other, we also have to really counter the trade and use of these harmful products. So, the guns, the bullets, the ammunition and also the trafficking, the drugs, alcohol and other things, because that's the way the commanders control the younger fighters. As I said, most of the fighters and the younger ones. It's really, it's really heartbreaking. Once they're using drugs, it's difficult to reach them, even psychologically. So, our struggle is wide. That's what we have to be inclusive, bring in people with expertise from other sectors.

And in 2015, I was in Canada when I was invited to Vancouver to share alternative ways of dealing with problems because they saw taking offenders to court was not producing the desired results and they felt that there had to be another way. I was invited to come and share experiences. In other words, if you follow the court system (and for all the lawyers, please, you will forgive me. I actually apologize beforehand if there's anything I said that harms anyone or hurts or makes you feel uncomfortable. But as I said, it's all common sense, isn't it?) If a person with resources can hire a lawyer to stand for them in court and they will win the case. What happens? So in peace building, we say it doesn't matter if someone has committed a crime, let them go to court. Let the court system take its course. If it's a jail, time is prescribed, let them go to jail. But make *sure* that the families visit each other first. And then after that, let them go and we can accompany them. Let's let them go to jail and build relationships with the person who is incarcerated because the families will always want to take revenge even if their person is the one who committed the crime. Still they say, 'Why? Why don't we have our father here? Why don't we have our mother here? Why are others having a good time whilst we are suffering. We will have to take revenge'. That thing of revenging the emotions, the fear, the anger. I talked about those barriers. So, there is a way of overcoming these things.

Political intrigue involved in working with armed groups, as well as governments, by the way. It's both sides, it's all sides. There could be more than two. And don't forget the international angle as well, it's also there. You may not see it, but it's there because there is so much interest in what is happening across the globe, but especially in Africa. So, you have to stay focused because you are concerned about the well-being of the people. Let that be your guide. You are not there to make judgment, but you're not going to let things just continue like that either. As I said, let the law take its course, but also mix it with this peace wakening that we are talking about. Once it happens, it's the most beautiful thing, I have to say. We sleep like babies. Once I go to bed, I'll bring my husband in, now I'm mentioning my husband (he's not here with me, he's in Uganda), but when we are together, as soon as I enter bed, I just start snoring. And then I wake after a few seconds and I hear a voice and it's him saying, 'stop pretending you're sleeping. Stop pretending.'. But I am actually asleep! I am asleep as soon as my head hits the pillow. That's it. It's like switching off a bulb, a light bulb. That's how it is with me, because I love the work I'm doing. I dedicate myself to this work. I don't even have to be paid for this work. It's something we are here to do.

Why were we brought in this world and why did we encounter the people we do, especially people who do bad things or things that we don't like? Why? I tell myself that there is a reason. There is a reason. So, let's not be scared. Let's go in and undo it. And Alice, the moment COVID-19 is over this, convene something. Let's meet face to face with this whole group. Let's learn experiences. Thank you.

I'd like to say, with this kind of experience on the ground, when you eventually become a policy maker, are you going to forget all those experiences? *Never*. The African Union has a transitional justice framework, and I was very much involved in that. And guess what? My angle was indigenous mechanisms! How great is that?

Mireille Tushiminina, Democratic Republic of Congo: Q4) How is reparation effective, even symbolic for vulnerable or poor perpetrators?

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: I think we have to understand that crimes that are perpetrated, the loss that families, communities, individuals go through can never be repaired, they can never come back. We have to acknowledge that. I think that's why in the African setting, there were so many rituals. In the religious realm - Islam, Christianity and so on (the religions that are being practiced today that most of us belong to), there is that power of prayer. What really is it doing? It's connecting us to The Powerful. The one I started with talking about the warp and weft that makes the fabric of community that there is a larger power. So, we can't bring back someone who has been killed, no matter what you do, no matter what you pay, you can't. And that's why, in fact, in some communities, even today as we speak, people who have caused harm to another community, another family, have actually offered themselves to physically have one of their family members join the other family.

The controversial one is through marriage that a girl is made to marry in the other family. The intention behind that is to build ties because once you have the mixed blood through marriage, you all become relatives and then you are not supposed to harm each other. But I mean, there is question marks about that. Suppose the girl doesn't want to. Does she really want to marry that side or what? Will it coincide with someone who she loves? I don't think so. So, the intention is good. But we don't accept the practice now. But I have seen today from Nigeria, you know, the pastor and the Imam, I've worked with them. I've worked with them in the late 90s and early 2000s where the Imam had a group of fighters and their and the pastor had a group of fighters, young guys who are fighting each other, fighting across their lines and actually killing each other. And out of that scuffle, one of these leaders lost their right hand. The right arm was physically lost, it was cut off. But his opposite number volunteered and said, until you die or until I die, I will be with you. I'll be your right hand. I haven't checked to see if the Imam and the pastor are still alive, but there is a great video about them, including interviews with their families. They have really integrated. In South Africa, there was someone from the Inkatha movement, and the ANC. They also had groups of young people fighting each other, causing mayhem. And these two leaders, I've worked with them, I've worked with them physically. If you invite one of them to a conference to come and share experiences of how they overcame their problems, the killings. One of them will ask, how about my brother from the other side? Are you inviting my brother if he's not here, I'm not coming. And the other one will do the same. So, we see that these things happen, and we are calling upon the indigenous ways of dealing with our conflicts.

Reconciliation in the African setting is to put balm on the wound, to put calming and cooling oils on the wound. So, reconciliation was done after the elders would say 'pay these many cows, or chickens' etc. Most of the time those things would be shared by all the parties. And in most cases, it was taboo to get rich on what has been paid to you during a reconciliation or a peace process indigenously. You were not supposed to get rich. If you're given a female cow, for instance, and she gets many babies, those calves are supposed to be given out to others and they multiply. And that means that everybody is now part of the family, again, repairing that broken fabric.

We talk about restorative justice. The justice that should heal the wound and bring you back together because you can never heal the damage (for example if someone if a family has lost a loved one). At the same time, you can't go without the punishment. So, these things we are talking about, restorative justice and so on, those are symbolic to show that there is no impunity. It's really a long process for the African indigenous mechanism, it was a long, long, process. And I've worked with healers in Mozambique. Mozambique is a great example. I don't have enough time to talk about this, but Mozambique is a great, great lesson to learn from. And I worked with those healers. The 'sangomas', as they call them, in Southern Africa. I've worked with them and I've seen the wonderful things they do. African rituals actually happen in the night because they have to evoke mysticism and myth and all that, you know, and that psychologically plays a positive role on their own party's.

Mireille Tushiminina, Democratic Republic of Congo: Q5) How do we reconcile African peace-building mechanisms with present-day 'westernization' of peace and reconciliation work?

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: Okay, there is a question about how we reconcile African peacebuilding mechanisms with present day Westernization of peace and reconciliation. I have a beautiful story. I've been in this field now for 40 years, and I've heard this from the Western world, especially the US. They actually said that the slave owners used to watch the slaves in the fields (maybe at the end of the day or at some point during the day) and the slaves used to gather under a tree, and they would be sitting in circles doing certain things.

And the slave owners were wondering, what on earth is this? And they studied them. They were very curious. And they discovered, oh, actually, these slaves were solving problems amongst themselves. So, they studied them further and some of the lessons they drew from that are the things that we teach as Western mechanisms of dealing with conflict. So really, let's be proud that we have given a lot. I mean, all of us, all of you on this platform who have worked at international level or at local level, but your work has been taken by either the funders, the supporters or the partners abroad. They take these lessons and they share and modify them. So, let us also take ownership of the westernized methods. For me, I would say it's a collective of the old and the new made better.

What I really work against is just ending a situation in court, and that's it. The court is just the *beginning* of a peace process - we should go beyond that and bring in the indigenous mechanisms. But for me, what I really call common sense.

Sylvie Ndongmo, Cameroon: Thank you so much Stella for this brilliant presentation. Really wonderful. How did you cope with all the stress and anxiety (if any) that usually come with such a hard and challenging work?

Dr. Mandiedza Parichi, Zimbabwe: We still have a critical challenge of a critical mass of women excluded in peace processes despite obvious efforts on the ground. What can be done to manage this challenge?

Mireille Tushiminina, Democratic Republic of Congo: We will take one more question after these two. Our last question: What was the most difficult experience you ever had?

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: Let's just remember (I think we are winding up) that reconciliation is not an easy thing for someone, you know, to ask for forgiveness and be willing to go through a reconciliation process. Remember, it's the powerful person who had the power, who committed the crime and yet that person can go down on their knees and say, 'I'm sorry'. As Dr. Hizkias Assefa (he's Ethiopian, but lived many years in Kenya and the U.S. and all over the place. Most of us on this platform know him), says it's not an easy thing for someone who has committed a huge crime to come down, because it's the issue of 'losing face'. Then, we also say that once someone has been forgiven, they can say, "Ha! I've won. See, they've forgiven me, they have said they understand".

No, that is not taking responsibility and ownership for what you've done. And in African way, you share a drink and you share food to weave back that fabric of community, of relationships. That's why it takes such a long time - you can't be still feeling bad and then go and go through a reconciliation process. I see in the media or in our work (I mean, even in the work I'm doing at the African Union, the U.N. or the A.U) is calling parties to reconcile. Reconciliation is not coming together and just talking and finding a solution. Reconciliation is *after* you have gone through that process, you've really, really dug deep and you're now at a good place, *all* of you in the conflict. And then you say, 'let's now rebuild that thing that we destroyed through this conflict'. And then you sit down, and you eat together. In my language, the word for friend is *muniwani*, which means 'the person who drinks with me'. Traditionally, you would drink from the same gourd/calabash/pot. You shared the same drink 1) to show that you're not poisoning the other and 2) if there's poison will die together. But really, it's to show the person is really pure of heart, they've gone through everything and they've dug deep – they have uprooted all the things. And this is what we call addressing the root causes. That's what it is. And then seeing that everybody has to take responsibility for the cause for example, the economic situation is driving someone to do horrible things. And now we're seeing the exposure of domestic violence during COVID-19 and all these horrible things that are happening. For me, we will not have done a good job as peace workers, peace builders, peace wakers if we continue pointing a finger at the men and say, you see, they've done it, they're harming the wife, the child. What we have to ask, *why? Why* is someone driven to do that? We are not asking the right questions. We should do that and then help prevent, help resolve and eventually reconcile.

I helped conceptualize FemWise at the African Union, I put in all my thoughts, beliefs etc. I gave the name FemWise with my children because my TOR asked me to choose a name. We're trying to officially recognize the role women and girls play.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria: Great contribution to our continent.

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: Were now cascading FemWise to regional and national level. My work is done, I'm now introducing positive Masculinity at AU level going down. My experience working largely with men has taught me a lot. We shouldn't exclude them we should stretch the arena to welcome everybody.

Mireille Tushiminina, Democratic Republic of Congo: Thank you Stella - I am proud to be a FemWise member. Sadly, stories like yours and other African women trailblazers tend to disappear from history. We need continuity, and your story, Stella, should be mainstream in our school curriculum. You are a true Pan Africanist.

Q8) (I promise this is the last one) Have you had a situation where the community/indigenous arrangements were in contradiction with the legal framework?

Halima A. O. Shuria, Kenya: Stella, I enjoyed every bit of your presentation and responses to the questions. Thank you so much for sharing your experiences with us.

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: About stress... It's very stressful as you're working where there are bullets and things exploding around you and it's very difficult. But we learned how to heal ourselves. Please don't allow anyone to work in this violent situation, walking in just like that. Prepare them. I've seen many Western partners bring in experts from abroad. They arrive in the evening or at night where things look okay. In the middle of the night there is gunfire and then many of them, as soon as they can pack their bags, go out on the next plane. They actually take their organizations to court abroad saying, how could you expose me to this?

So, it's not an easy thing. You have to know there is danger. But there are so many ways of dealing with this. And always, I believe if your work is good, people will reach out to you. And when they reach out to you to bring you in, they will take care of you in one way or another. I wouldn't say everybody should just jump in and do it, especially where there is violence and all that. No way. However just ask yourself. And also, the families. I mean, for many years, I never told my family where I was going. No, no, I wouldn't tell them I'm going to that particular place or country where there is fighting. Sometimes they would hear it on the BBC and then that would traumatize them even more. So, I learned how to work with my family, and because I teach a Masters class, I happened to teach one of my children in Switzerland. I had to sit with and say, during this course, you're going to hear many things about me and from me, that you didn't know. I had to sit with her and prevent that trauma on her part, because many of us really use our own life examples as examples. Otherwise, we will be challenged and asked where we get all this information.

One day in Austria, I was teaching at the European Peace University in Stadtschlaining, and one of my students whom I didn't recognize was a young guy, a white boy. He stood up in the midst of my lecture and said, 'Stella, you've been telling us so many things. Who exactly are you quoting?' 'He was waiting to hear me say Professor so-and-so. And I said, 'you know what? I'm quoting my grandmother'. And all the others laughed and clapped. And I was serious, meaning all of us have experience of violence, whether we admit it or not, whether we know it or not. And we've survived it. Some are still going through it. But somehow, we have that energy, what I'm calling *resources* inside of us. We draw on that. And for me, when I saw that we needed to learn how to do self-healing was after the genocide in Rwanda because I was working there before the genocide. Then the genocide happened. And we also kept many of the women, especially women, because I'm from Uganda, it's a neighboring country. We kept many of them during the crisis and we were among the first ones to go in to respond. I was asked to go in and help the women cry, and that's what I went in to do. And the things I saw, honestly when I came home, I remember I looked in their living room. There were no flowers. I love flowers in the house. There were no flowers. I wept and wept. I went to my bedroom and wept uncontrollably.

Then on Monday, when we went back to the office, I told this to one of my colleagues whom I had gone with to Rwanda, and she said when she went home her family had asked her for money

to buy sugar as they were making tea. And she too broke down and cried. She was wondering how they could ask her for money to buy sugar and not have bought it themselves since it cost little money.

We then realized we were traumatized from the experience in Rwanda. So we've gone through trauma, self-trauma, healing and also healing others as well.

The question of the contradiction between the indigenous and the legal framework – oh yes, all the time. *All the time*. And Alice will tell you that when we who are rooted in peacebuilding meet with our friends who work in human rights field, many times we clash. Funny to say, but we've learned how to find a nexus because we are accused of letting people go free. And then for us, we are accusing them that the human rights workers, that the legal framework, let's say the legal system of seeing life as black, black and white, right and wrong. And for us, we are saying a person who is right today will be wrong tomorrow. And the person was wrong today will be right tomorrow. But then we've tried to find a way to work together. Mostly our field was from the faith-based perspective, forgiveness, nonviolence and so on and so forth. Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. (who is relevant today in what we are seeing with the issue of George Floyd on the TV), the Dalai Lama, Bishop Desmond Tutu later and so on and so forth were members of the organization I worked with in the Netherlands.

We came from that angle. But then it wasn't just excusing anyone just like that. And that's why we are saying if the court judges someone as having wrong and they've got to serve time in prison, we bring the families together. It's a long process. And then we have to make sure there is visitation to the prison and so on and so forth where it is allowed. I have seen the legal system move from how it was so stern before. And now they are also embracing ADR (alternative dispute resolution) and they are encouraging many parties to resolve their conflict outside of court. And we are there to play that role. And that's one of the reasons I went to Canada.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria: This is a good development. We have this saying in our local language translated as follows, 'bending down to the position of a dwarf is not a disability'. Meaning - reaching out to the unwilling to achieve a greater objective. I'm glad particularly about this masculinity project.

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: I don't know if I'm still on. I was working in the Caribbean in a country called Surinam, it's in the northern part of South America touching the Caribbean. They were trying to do national dialogue, but there was so much chaos. I know Surinam very well because I lived in the Netherlands and the Dutch were the colonizers there, so I know their music, their dance and so on. So, we went there, and we were talking about my experience referring to the women. At one point I went to the bathroom and the women who were in the room came running up to me and they were saying "umano fado! Umano fado!". And that means, 'no matter what you do to a woman, a woman will never fall down. She will never fall down'. She has this immense soul and spirit. I think the woman plays a central role in our lives, not just in Africa, but everywhere else. They were celebrating my story because I shared with

them this story, meaning that although someone has caused so much harm, you can actually reach out. And you cross the dividing line, you cross to the other side. Never wait for the other person to come to you - go to the other person. And I was telling my story and then someone who was from the U.N. during break told me, 'Stella, you know, you should have a movie made of your story of survival from the soldiers'. And then she said, I know who will play your part, 'Angelina Jolie will be the right person'. I happen to know Angelina Jolie and her former husband. But I also happen to know the mother of Michael Jordan. She had invited me to Nairobi, where she has a program and when we met and I told her, oh, I was so excited and I told her, 'My story. Angelina Jolie is going to play my part!'. And she looked at me, this is the mother of Michael Jordan of Nike, she looked at me, said, 'Honey, Angelina Jolie ain't black!'

And that's when I realized, oh, my God, yes, actually, if we had to do the movie, it has to be an African woman. I hadn't realized that. And when I told my child and they said, 'Mom, you didn't realize that?' There is a lot of humor in some of the things we do.

And I encourage all of us to have humor.

Mary Balikungeri, Rwanda: Thank you sister Stella. You have always been my Idol. Keep inspiring us women of our continent. You are our hero. I wish I could spend a day with you with no interruption and engage with you face to face. Be blessed Stella.

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: Be blessed sisters and brothers. It's a real great honor to share my life with you all.

Salim Musa Umar, Nigeria: Thank you very much Mama Stella .

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: As you can see, I love talking, I love interacting, dancing, jumping all over the place. I make fighters sing and dance deep into the night!!

Mireille Tushiminina, Democratic Republic of Congo: You deserve and should be celebrated!

Sophie Havyarimana, Burundi: My great pleasure to hear the presentation. Very inspiring. Thank you very much, Stella

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: We shall all meet after corona.

Mireille Tushiminina, Democratic Republic of Congo: Thank you, Stella, wow what a great inspiring session. Thank you for challenging us to rethink these dominant narratives. Your insights were very helpful and seemed to have provided additional inputs which will serve the latter function of this group. I will now invite Alice Nderitu for the vote of thanks. Over to you Alice.

Hibaa Ismael, Djibouti: Dear Mama Stella, thank you very much! I just wanted to say I really and deeply appreciate your presentation and your passion! Acknowledging that we have been brought to this planet to bring out good in people, is simply amazing. That is something I have been learning for the past year after a traumatic experience, but you are so right! And yes, Alice we have to meet in person!!

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: Thanks! Thanks!

Fatima Maiga, Mali: Dear Mama, merci.

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: De rien, ma cherie.

I'll still be supporting FemWise at regional and national level. Not at the Secretariat level - we recruited staff (some of you know them already). FemWise is supposed to harvest all these experiences regularly, they will get there eventually. So many stories out there. We need them.

Pravina Makan-Lakha, South Africa: Very powerful as always, Stella. Glad and privileged to have experienced that 'Stella Magic' in person.

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: I do magic too!! Idi Amin was asked by international media, "we understand you like to blow your trumpet", and he responded, "oh yes, I also beat the guitar, the drums, the accordion and I even beat the bagpipes!"

He didn't understand the saying of the trumpet, but see what he did? He turned it onto positive outcomes! He hurt us but he also had brilliant moments. We wanted him back from exile in Saudi Arabia to reconcile, he died before it happened. Some of us are in touch with his family.

Thus, the movie: Last King of Scotland, our army had bagpipes complete with the Scottish men kilts.

Alice Nderitu, Kenya: We just listened to a sage. What a gift you are to this continent, Mama Stella. We have you to thank for imagining that something like FemWise could exist. You created it, nurtured it and now it's no longer a toddler but a continental body. You even gave it a name; you came up with the name 'FemWise'. You created a legacy.

It was great listening to you today. Your voice is so calming and reassuring too!!

I know that what you said this afternoon is something I will keep playing over and over, listening to the wisdom over and over. Mama Stella, you have said it all. How I wish all of you could meet Stella in person and see her magic tricks (she is a magician for real).

How I wish there was a book on Mama Stella! How I imagine that maybe this afternoon we have laid out a table of contents on the Book on Mama Stella!!

Let me just say thank you to Mama Stella, thank you to Mireille, moderating despite her bereavement, thanks to Shama who will give us all this in prose, working late into the night. Thanks to Regina.

We had so much fun behind the scenes, arranging all this and sadness too when Mireille was bereaved. One of the most beautiful memories I take from this all is Mireille's joy when I asked her to moderate Stella.

Mireille was so, so happy and you could tell how much she loved it through her moderation. So, I will leave you with Mireille's gift to us of Stella's little video.

Please don't see this post as the end of the conversation let's keep speaking to Mama Stella.

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: Thank you, everyone. Pravina, I was with Vasu in Paramaribo, Suriname.

Dr. Mandiedza Parichi, Zimbabwe: Stella, you are such an inspiration. I'm listening to your clips again and again. God bless you.

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: God bless you too, Dr. Parichi. Salim, yes, let's all be curious, let's lift each other up, women, men, boys and girls.

Ambassador Mpeo Mahase-Moiloa, The Kingdom of Lesotho: Stella, I didn't find time to tune in due to prior commitment. But I promise you I am going to find a quiet, comfortable corner and listen to you. May you keep that little lamp of yours shining, for others to ignite hope and strength from it. Thank you!

Amina Hassan Ahmed, Nigeria: Thank you Stella, may God continue to bless and help you.

Susan Owino-Chege, Kenya: Thank you Stella. You are so inspiring. Wow, awesome experience sharing. You can't imagine I had to put full volume on my phone attracting attention of my sons who are now very interested in listening again. May our dear Lord bless you abundantly for sharing such wealth of experience.

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: Awesome! Awesome!

Adah Mbah, Cameroon: Thank you so much, Stella. This has been a wonderful moment listening to your credible experiences as you share your thoughts, feelings and actions as a peacebuilder.

Regina Mutiru, Kenya: Thank you so much Ma Stella.

Dr. Dorothy Goredema, Zimbabwe: Thank you very much Mama Stella. I have learnt a lot.

Christine Mutimura-Wekesa, Rwanda: Thanks Mama Stella for such an enriching presentation. So many lessons to learn!! I like how you break it down from family to community level and the links therein for purposes of resolving conflict.

FEMWISE is such a brilliantly thought out platform that I believe will help nurture us the younger ones to follow your lead and continue from where you will stop as peace wakers!! Congratulations on such an achievement.

The stories shared on this platform have been quite inspiring and I am hoping that we could also use this platform in the future to link one another for purposes of immersing those who are interested in learning through voluntary participation during any ongoing peace process around the continent.

Samia El Hashmi, Sudan: Thank you Stella Sabiiti for the informative presentation. I missed I had an online meeting. We all enjoyed the presentation and the thoughtful questions. Further thank for the moderator who managed to direct the discussion in a very smooth way.

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: Thanks so much.

Let me take this opportunity to say that some members on this platform have been part of my journey of many years. ACCORD has been a strong structure behind several of the AU peace and security work, including FemWise. The Institute for Inclusive Security in the US has years of convening many of us on this platform. Others we've collaborated, either the Faith-based members on this platform, academia, decisionmakers at policy making level, or those working from the women peace and security angle, development and indeed those pushing for integrating indigenous Mechanisms in peace and justice. As they say, peace is a group effort. I'm grateful to you all, and the learning and sharing continues, including on this platform.

Dr. Mandiedza Parichi, Zimbabwe: Thank you Stella you are Power. Mireille, thank you so much for this well coordinated great conversation. Thanks Alice and Regina for yet another great inspiring weekend.

Dr. Sellah Nasimiyu King'oro, Kenya: Thank you Stella for the inspiration.

Millicent Oucho Otieno, Kenya: Thank you Stella, your journey and life is inspirational, much appreciated.

Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru, Uganda: I am late but have followed all. God bless you for sharing from a mama's heart.

Florence Mpaayei, Kenya: Stella dear. Sorry I missed your session. I've always gleaned gems from you since we first met. I will not say how many years ago. You're a blessing and a gift to us and the globe. Continue to blossom.

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: Thanks, dear sisters.

Florence, behind the scenes as we were planning this seminar, I was correcting the spelling of my surname, we made jokes, including me saying Sabiiti is even not my name, it's my husband's name. That reminded me of our conversation, you and I (I won't mention the year either!) and I said, Florence, your last name is so difficult, and young as you were, you replied: Stella, difficult from whose point of view?

I learned a lesson that day. I promised myself to see things, including pronouncing other people's names, and names of places, from their original point of view.

Mary Balikungeri, Rwanda: Thank you for sharing the video, Mireille. Stella, what a beautiful and yet a sad story. Thank you for reminding us positive thinking even in the face of evil. So great to belong here. Stay blessed Stella, and all.

Doreen Nkala, Zimbabwe: A strategy from God in most case we try to fight back even when we are on the weaker side. What a way of being inclusive but it worked.

Stella Mystica Sabiiti, Uganda: Blessings to all of us indeed.

This concluded Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism's 6th Seminar Series.

Please click this link to view Stella Sabiiti's recording of her public lecture on Indigenous Peace Mechanisms as part of her lectures at the University of Basel, at the World Peace Academy - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yK3rj2LcZYg>

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MECHANISMS

5 STAGES OF MEDIATION

Stella Mystica Sabiiti

Adapted from Prof Timothy Murithi
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STAGE 1: Responsibility & Guilt

After a fact-finding process where the views of victims, the accused and witnesses are heard, the accused - if considered to have done wrong - are:

- **encouraged**, both by the Council and other community members in the forum, to ***acknowledge responsibility***
- ***And admit guilt***

STAGE 2: Remorse & Repentance

- perpetrators are encouraged to:
 - *demonstrate genuine remorse*
 - *repent*
- ❖ *NOTE: the harm done by the offender is shared by family, extended family, clan etc* THUS the need for the whole group to be involved in solution

STAGE 3: Forgiveness & Mercy

- perpetrators are encouraged to *ask for forgiveness*
- victims in their turn are encouraged to *show mercy*


STAGE 4: Symbolic Reparation

- **perpetrators** are required to *pay an appropriate compensation or reparation* for the wrong done
- This is often more **symbolic** than a repayment in-kind
- the primary function is to **reinforce** the **remorse** of the perpetrators
- **Amnesty** can thus be granted, but **not** with **impunity**

STAGE 5 Reconciliation

seeks to **consolidate** the whole **process** by:


- encouraging the parties including friends and family to **commit** themselves to **reconciliation**
- reconciliation rituals include some kind of bitterness to signify the bitterness of the conflict (eg **Mato Oput** herb drink)
- drinking and eating together, from the same vessel (calabash, pot, plate etc) to signify harmony and togetherness



Both groups are encouraged to:

- embrace **co-existence**
- work towards **healing** the **relationship** between them
- thus contribute towards **restoring harmony** within the **community**

The community is vital in ensuring the integrity and viability of the society

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- The act of reconciliation is vital in that it symbolizes the willingness of the parties to **move beyond the psychological bitterness** that had prevailed in the minds of the parties during the conflict situation

Biographies



Stella Mystica Sabiiti

Over the years Stella Mystica Sabiiti has developed a comprehensive approach to conflict transformation, grounded in her personal experience of war and torture, and a life spent as a refugee on three continents. Stella is currently UN Women Advisor to the African Union (AU)'s Network of Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa) following her study whose recommendations and modalities for the establishment of the network were endorsed by the AU Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council and finally by the AU Heads of State (July 2018). Previous to that Stella served as Team Leader at the AU's Peace and Security Department on a team of Experts to operationalize the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) from 2005 and in 2012 she moved to the Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) in the Bureau of the Chairperson as a peace and security expert.

In 2002, Stella led a successful peace process between the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF2) rebel group and the current Government of Uganda. As a university student in 1976 she was abducted and tortured by soldiers of President Idd Amin. That experience shaped her future dedication to working with armed groups for peace. Following the overthrow of President Amin in 1979 the soldiers formed themselves into the very UNRF 2 she was appointed to facilitate in the peace process 26 years later. She stays in constant touch with some of those involved in peace process, including women and ex-combatants.

Stella has lectured at the European Peace University (EPU) in Austria and at the World Peace Academy at the University of Basel in Switzerland and trains groups in conflict analysis, negotiation and mediation, peace keeping/peace support operations, as well as in indigenous mechanisms of peacebuilding, gender and issues related to Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). She continues to support peace processes in Africa, Latin America and the Asia/Pacific Region. She founded the Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE) in Uganda in 1995 and previous to that she worked with the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) in The Netherlands, as head of the Africa Program and after working at United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and with the Africa Church Information Service as Deputy Editor in Chief in Nairobi, Kenya.

She belongs to the Community of Experts on UNSCR 1325 as well as being a qualified Senior Mission Leader for Peace Support Operations. She develops curriculum for and trains

Peacekeepers around the continent. She studied Sociology and Communications (among others) in Uganda, Canada and The Netherlands.



Mireille Tushiminina

Ms. Mireille Tushiminina, a national of Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has recently joined UN Women Burundi as a Country Program Manager consultant. Previously, Ms. Tushiminina served as Senior Gender Adviser in Mogadishu, Somalia. Prior to that, she was the Executive Executive Director of the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa where she has focused extensively on monitoring and reporting on various gross human rights violations by armed force groups, the ongoing Anglophone crisis (in Cameroon) and socioeconomic dimensions of conflict in African fragile states. Prior to that, and for over 20 years, she held senior management level positions in international development, conflict prevention & resolution, peacebuilding, political reforms, women's peace and security, and gender & democratization.

She has demonstrated expertise in negotiation, mediation, prevention of violent extremism programs monitoring, and evaluation at national, regional, and international levels. Amongst many recognitions and awards, she is a Global Rockefeller Foundation Fellow, MLK Award recipient, Archbishop Tutu Leadership Fellow and an Alum of the Crans Montana New Leaders for Tomorrow. Equally, she was named the face of African Solidarity by the African Union. She is a certified Negotiator and African Women Mediator on the FemWise, a member of the African Governance Architecture's Technical Reference Group of Experts at the African Union, and spearheaded many women's group across the continent.

In the past decade, Ms. Tushiminina held various positions, including that with the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) as the Gender and Political Affairs Advisor, the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa based in Buea, and the Shalupe Foundation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and also consulted for Africans Rising, International IDEA, the National Human Rights Commission, the American Bar Association, Freedom House and other human rights institutions.

Ms. Tushiminina holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Northeastern University, a Master's degree from Davenport University, a Diploma in Rule of Law and Policy from Harvard Law

School, an Executive degree from Oxford Saïd Business School, a Diploma in Mediation and Negotiation from the Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael and currently working on a Doctor of Law and Public Policy.