



# Can Inclusive Peace Processes Work?

## New evidence from a multi-year research project

Policy Brief

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Thania Paffenholz

This policy brief is based on results from the multi-year research (2011-2015) on “Broadening Participation in Political Negotiations and Implementation” conducted at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies’ Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding

## Background

The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva conducted a multi-year research on “Broadening Participation in Political Negotiations and Implementation” (2011-2015). The project analysed how inclusion works in practice, comparing 40 in-depth country case studies of peace and constitution-making negotiations and their implementation from 1990 to 2013, assessing the role of all additionally included actors next to the main conflict parties; these were civil society and women groups, but also hard to reach constituencies and sometimes even left out armed groups. Seven key findings and five recommendations for mediators, donors, civil society organisations and their partners are presented in this paper.

Inclusive peace processes are slowly replacing the traditional exclusive peace deals negotiated solely between two or more armed groups. From Colombia to Libya or Myanmar, current peace processes seek to broaden participation even at the highest level of official (track 1) peace negotiations. Civil society groups, but also political parties and women’s groups often take part in these negotiations and their implementation in formal roles and structures. However, policy makers and international donors struggle to respond

adequately to calls for greater inclusion. This is because there is a lack of knowledge as to how inclusion can practically work in order to have a positive impact on the quality and sustainability of peace deals without reducing the likelihood that agreements are being reached. With a team of more than 30 researchers, the project “Broadening Participation in Political Negotiations and Implementation” produced seven key findings for successful inclusive peace processes:

## Findings

**1. Quality counts, not just quantity:** When included actors were able to influence the quality of agreements (defined as addressing the causes of conflict), and/or the implementation of these issues, the rate of peace agreements being reached and implemented was much higher. Interestingly, when women groups had an influential role in a process, the positive impact was even stronger. This shows that what matters is not merely the quantity of actors included, but the quality and influence of their contributions. For example, the Constituent Assembly in Nepal was the most representative body of its kind in Asia in terms of gender, cast and minority representation. However, the



Community and civil society members participate in the Economic and Social Development Research (ESDR) forum to facilitate participation in the Yemeni National Dialogue. Photographer: US Institute for Peace <https://www.flickr.com/photos/usipeace/15643671920>

## 7 Modalities of Inclusion

### 1. Direct representation at the negotiation table

- A. Inclusion within delegations
- B. Included actors' own delegations

### 2. Observer status for selected groups

### 3. Consultations:

- A. Official / unofficial
- B. Elite / broader / public

### 4. Inclusive commissions

- A. Post-agreement commissions
- B. Commissions conducting peace process
- C. Permanent bodies

### 5. High-level problem-solving workshops

### 6. Public decision-making (i.e. referendum)

### 7. Mass action

main political established parties dominated all decision-making and hindered included societal actors from asserting influence.

**2. Broader Inclusion does not weaken peace negotiations:** Contrary to assumptions made by many mediators, broader inclusion does not reduce the likelihood of reaching agreements. Only in one case was an agreement not reached when a high number of included actors had significant influence on the process.

**3. The push for broader inclusion is mostly motivated by realpolitik, rather than by normative considerations:** Conflict parties and mediators push for broader inclusion to get legitimacy, public buy-in, or include hardliner constituencies. Interestingly, inclusion is rarely adopted for normative reasons, but rather initiated due to realpolitik. However, this was different when it came to the inclusion of women. There, inclusion was only made possible due to concerted effort by the women themselves and their international supporters.

**4. Inclusion occurs in different modalities, both at the table and beyond:** The research found that inclusion takes place through different modalities at the table but also prior to and in parallel to official negotiations, as well as during implementation. While seven inclusion modalities have been identified (see box), success cases always featured a combination of different inclusion modalities.

**5. Implementation is key but often neglected:** All case studies show that most attention of the international community goes into the negotiation phase. However, many processes fail or substantial gains of inclusive negotiations get lost during implementation. The research found that inclusive post-agreement commissions such as monitoring bodies and constitution review commissions shape the implementation of an agreement, thus their inclusive composition and proper functioning needs preparation and monitoring.

**6. Process design is crucial:** How inclusive peace processes are designed is fundamental as it either enables or constrains the ability of included actors to exercise influence. Whatever the inclusion modality, rules and procedures can negate the benefits of inclusion. For example, in almost all national dialogues, despite apparent broad participation, ultimate decision-making power rested with a small group of already-powerful actors. In the 2001 Somali peace process, women were allocated a quota in all six "reconciliation" committees, but any decision by the committees required the authorisation of a leadership committee of male clan elders, effectively muting women's influence.

For inclusion modalities further from the negotiation table such as consultations, appropriate transfer strategies to the table are often neglected. Consultative forums are put in place and the results of the debates are not necessarily taken into account. However, the case of the African Union-led 2008 negotiations in Kenya shows that consultations can be very influential: three consultative civil society forums, one only for women, managed to get most of their demands into the peace agreements by applying a joint strategy of handing over short, concise recommendation papers, engaging with mediators and negotiators, but also issuing public statements and lobbying the international community.

Furthermore, civil society groups can increase their influence if they manage to overcome their divisions through coalition building and joint positioning. For example, for the case of women, in Kenya, Graça Machel, member of the AU team, pushed women to overcome their differences. Conversely, in Yemen, although women benefitted from a 30 per cent quota in the national dialogue, they did not form a unified group and rarely voted as a block, thus failing to pass many of the issues of concern to them. The role of the mediators has also been important. When mediators were inclusion-friendly and knew how to manage inclusion strategically, this has helped groups to assert influence.

Selection is key: Who is included or not is essential. Quotas and transparent selection criteria and procedures have proven useful. However, there has been a tendency to often invite only "like-minded"

groups, often civil society groups close to the parties, or else, peace-oriented change actors. In both cases, important actors can be excluded with crucial consequences for the process. For example, the National Assembly in Guatemala has been a highly representative body. However, one of the most influential civil society organizations, the landowners association, was excluded. Together with the political establishment they were able to lobby against the implementation of the peace agreement.

Moreover, the individuals designated to represent included groups also need to be perceived as representative and legitimate. For example, in Burundi, the Hutu negotiators rejected the participation of women's groups not because they were women, but because many of them were perceived as representing only the Tutsi community.

Finally, preparedness and support structures prior to, during and after negotiations can substantially enhance the influence of civil society and other groups. Support can take the form of meeting space, Internet access, preparatory workshops and training, or expert support to draft position papers and understand legal subtleties.

**7. Power matters:** Inclusive processes challenge established power structures, and resistance by powerful elites is to be expected. However, the case studies show that local civil society groups and the international community have been ill prepared to handle elite resistance. Public buy-in for an agreement or constitution is also important and is influenced by the political climate in the country and the attitude of powerful actors. However, public buy-in can also be created. In Northern Ireland, in the run up to the referendum over the Good Friday Peace Agreement, a massive civil society campaign managed to push for a positive outcome of the referendum. Regional powers

also matter. The latest developments in Yemen are a sad example of how the lack of buy-in by major elites and regional actors can destroy a very inclusive process.

## Recommendations

The findings presented above derive the following recommendations for mediators, donors, civil society organisations and their partners are:

- 1) Support and lobby for a good mix of inclusion modalities at the negotiation table and beyond in all phases of the process.
- 2) Ensure that included actors can exercise influence by providing support and expertise to societal and political actors beyond the main parties and helping design adequate processes.
- 3) Apply coherent strategies that combine support and empowerment measures with support to the peace process such as action to reduce violence and elite resistance, strengthen public buy-in and regional actors' commitments.
- 4) Strengthen inclusion-awareness among mediators and teams as well as conflict parties.
- 5) Improve monitoring mechanisms during implementation of agreements.

The results of the "Broadening Participation Project" are already in high demand in the policy and practice world. The project has just given substantial inputs into the three ongoing High Level UN Review processes on Peacebuilding, Peace Support as well as Women, Peace and Security (1325 Review). It has also advised on how to improve inclusive peace processes in Colombia, South Sudan, Ukraine, Mali, Myanmar or Syria.

More Information: [thania.paffenholz@graduateinstitute.ch](mailto:thania.paffenholz@graduateinstitute.ch)

<http://graduateinstitute.ch/home/research/centresandprogrammes/ccdp/publications/publications-issuebriefs.html>

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