

# RESULTS ON WOMEN AND GENDER FROM THE 'BROADER PARTICIPATION' AND 'CIVIL SOCIETY AND PEACEBUILDING' PROJECTS

The inclusion of women is still not viewed by many mediators and conflict parties as an essential component of the negotiation and implementation of peace and transition agreements. This is despite the many successes achieved by women's groups in supporting negotiations and the extensive lobbying by UN Women and other international and local organizations. A central problem is the lack of evidence-based knowledge on the functioning and impact of inclusion on peace and other political processes (negotiations and beyond). As a consequence, negotiations and peace processes are all too often designed on the basis of untested hypotheses or normative biases, instead of on solid evidence-based findings.

Under the lead of Dr Thania Paffenholz, the Graduate Institute's Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP) in Geneva has conducted a number of research projects under the research cluster on "Participatory Peace Processes and Political Transitions".

The 'Civil Society and Peacebuilding' Project (2006-2010)<sup>1</sup> investigated the role of civil society in various stages of conflict and peace processes on the basis of a joint framework applied to 12 in-depth case studies. The subsequent 'Broader Participation' (2011-2015)<sup>2</sup> project studied the role of *all* additional actors next to the main negotiation/conflict parties during political negotiations and their implementation in 40 in-depth case studies. The main findings related to women and gender<sup>3</sup> so far are:

**The quality participation of women's groups is correlated with positive negotiation outcomes:** When women's groups were able to strongly influence negotiations or push for a peace deal an agreement was *always* reached. Even when there was only some involvement of women's groups, agreements were mostly reached. When women's groups were not involved, the chance of reaching an agreement was considerably lower. It is also important to note that in two thirds of the cases where an agreement was reached there was no participation of women. This shows that the involvement of women is only one factor influencing the achievement of agreements. However, the results demonstrate that women's inclusion can increase the probability of reaching an agreement.

**Quality participation by women's groups is correlated with positive implementation outcomes:** When women's groups were able to exercise a strong influence, the chances of agreements being *implemented* were much higher than when women's groups could only exercise moderate influence or when women were not involved at all.

**Numbers are not all that matter.** The findings on quality participation by women demonstrate that it is not simply enough to increase the number of women involved, rather it is their ability to exercise influence that counts.

**Women's inclusion does not only take place at the negotiation table:** There remains an excessive focus on the negotiation table as the locus of the peace and transition process. However, inclusion can take place during all phases of the process and at varying distances from the table. Seven inclusion modalities were identified and women were found to have participated in all. These models can take place in parallel or at different times of the process but success cases always featured a combination of different inclusion modalities.

## 7 MODELS OF INCLUSION

1. **Direct representation at the negotiation table**
  - a. Inclusion within negotiation delegations
  - b. Enlarging the number of negotiation delegations
  - c. National Dialogue (peacemaking, constitution making, reforms)
2. **Observer status:** Selected groups or public via media
3. **Consultations:** official/unofficial; elite/broader/public
4. **Inclusive commissions**
  - a. Post-agreement commissions
  - b. Commissions preparing/conducting peace process
  - c. Permanent bodies
5. **High-level problem solving workshops** (Track 1.5)
6. **Public decision-making** (i.e. referendum)
7. **Mass action**

**Women's groups were the second largest category of included actors in all inclusion models.** In 27 of our 40 cases women participated in one or more inclusion models. The largest category of included actors was organized civil society. Women were most frequently included in different forms of "consultations" followed by "post-agreement mechanisms or commissions" (see box).

**Women's inclusion still depends on inside and outside pressure and is largely based on normative support.**

Women's inclusion was mostly initiated and achieved due to lobbying by women's organizations, the international community, or the mediators. Interestingly, this was not the case for other included actors such as civil society or political parties. Their inclusion was most frequently initiated by the conflict parties (followed by mediators) in order to increase legitimacy, support, power, or effectiveness.

**Women are mostly included through women's NGOs and other gender specific organizations.** Some cases point to the fact that engagement of women's organizations often happens at the expense of mainstreaming gender issues into broader civil society.

**The first issues pushed for by included women's groups were women's rights and gender provisions in agreements but they also pushed for the signing of peace agreements.** When women were more strongly involved during the negotiation process, they were able to advocate for more context-specific gender and women's issues, such as gender provision in land laws. However, in many cases featuring strong influence by women, these groups were also at the forefront of pushing conflict parties, both inside and outside of the negotiations, to reach an agreement. A clear example of this being Liberia.

**The possibilities to organize within civil society differ between men and women** (as it differs between people from different classes or ethnic backgrounds). The research found that men hold the majority of leading positions in civil society organizations. There are, of course, numerous examples of female mobilization in civil society (e.g. women's movements, women's NGOs), and some have received international attention. However, the ways in which the production and reproduction of power within civil society is interlinked with gender structures of the family, the state, and the market is pertinent for women's influence on political processes.

A number of process and context factors were identified that either supported or hindered the ability of  
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women's groups to influence peace and transition processes. These were:

**Process factors that support or hinder quality inclusion are:** decision making within inclusion models; selection criteria and procedures including gender quotas; coalition building; transfer strategies; support structures for women's groups and participants during negotiations; and flexible and targeted funding (see more under main results of Broadening Participation Project).

**Context factors that support or hinder quality inclusion are:** power politics and elite resistance; regional and geopolitical context; level of violence; mediators friendly towards the inclusion of women; public buy in; long-term preparedness of women's groups; and coalition building (see more under main results of Broadening Participation Project).

## WHAT DO THESE RESULTS MEAN FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE?

- The results provide policy makers and practitioners with evidenced-based justification that the inclusion of women is not simply a normative issue. The fact that the inclusion of women's groups is correlated with much higher rates of implementing peace and other political agreements substantiates the positive effects of including women in these processes.
- The results lend additional weight to calls for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325.
- Moreover, the results give a more in-depth and nuanced picture. They highlight that it is not women's participation *per se* that achieves positive outcomes. Rather, it is the quality inclusion of women that counts. This finding demonstrates the need to change the way in which advocacy for women's inclusion is currently being practiced. The main focus should not be solely on numbers.
- Numbers still matter, but lobbying for participation has to be combined with strategies in support of quality inclusion. The results also show that women remain side-lined when they do not push for inclusion or are not supported in this endeavour.

The results also offer concrete policy and operational advice on how to enhance and support the quality participation of women:

- **Women's participation is not only relevant at the**

**negotiation table**, but throughout the range of inclusion modalities documented and analysed in the Broader Participation project.

- **Women's groups need to be part of decision-making bodies** within inclusion modalities.
- **Gender quotas are important** for the selection of both mediators and involved groups.
- **Preparedness of women's groups is important.** Short term support measures designed to help women make targeted inputs into negotiations or important implementation processes were found to be highly effective. Long-term support for the building of women's capacities was also important.
- **Monitoring achievements is key and needs to be substantially strengthened:** The research points to the need to strengthen monitoring mechanisms and initiatives as achievements made during negotiations are often not followed through during implementation. With civil society and women's groups often weak in monitoring and advocacy, more support is needed here.
- **Supporting women's groups alone is not sufficient.** The political and socio-economic context has to be considered. Winning the support of key regional and international actors as well as the national political elite is crucial. This is not only important for the inclusion of women but for the peace process as a whole and has to be part of the policy support strategy.
- **The overall level of violence can have a negative impact on women's inclusion.** Thus support for women's inclusion must encompass support for violence reduction more generally.

When it comes to supporting women's participation in peace processes, the devil is in detail. There is now a need to systematically transfer these results to different policy and practitioner communities. The establishment of the 'Inclusive Peace Initiative' at the Graduate Institute aims at filling this void in a structured way and in partnership with relevant organizations. The project has just conducted a two day expert workshop with UN Women and other organizations focusing on the Women, Peace and Security agenda. The workshop participants highlighted the importance of the project's results for the 2015 High level Review process of 1325 and beyond. Furthermore, the Graduate Institute has been asked by UN Women to give a substantial contribution to this UN Review process.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> 'Civil Society and Peacebuilding' Project Briefing Paper  
<http://graduateinstitute.ch/files/live/sites/iheid/files/sites/ccdp/shared/Docs/Publications/briefingpapercivil%20society.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> 'Broader Participation' Project Briefing Paper  
<http://graduateinstitute.ch/files/live/sites/iheid/files/sites/ccdp/shared/Docs/Publications/briefingpaperbroader%20participation.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> **Gender as an issue:** The research has looked at gender relations in society, during conflicts and peace processes.

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