Peace Negotiations and Agreements

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Negotiations to end wars are never simple. They involve compromises, consensus-building and some level of mutual trust. Often parties negotiate because they recognise the gains that can be made, but even "interest-based" negotiations require enemies to trust each other. For people affected by violence, or those who have fought for a cause, accepting an opponent's demands is difficult. But for peace to take root, negotiations are an essential starting point. As agreements are reached on key issues, the foundations of peace are strengthened. In many instances the decisions reached at the peace table set the course for the socioeconomic and political transformation of a country. Negotiated agreements are in effect a blueprint for the future.

If gender perspectives are absent at this stage, it becomes more difficult to insert them later. It is never too early to engage in peace processes—but sometimes it can be too late. This chapter explains the different types of negotiations that occur primarily at the national level, highlighting the challenges facing women, the strategies they have developed to gain their place at the peace table and the contributions they make.

1. WHAT ARE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND AGREEMENTS?

An **agreement or accord** is a formal commitment between hostile parties to end a war. Peace agreements can vary considerably. The 1991 Paris Peace Accords that led to the end of the conflict in **Cambodia** were essentially an agreement to end international involvement in the war, and a **ceasefire** to transform a military conflict into a political one, with the United Nations (UN) present and in control.[1] In contrast, in 1996 in **Guatemala**, detailed and extensive agreements provided a framework for political, economic, legislative and social reform and for the transformation of military structures and institutions. Peace agreements often seek to resolve protracted conflicts and provide a new vision for inter-group and interstate relations at the regional, national or local level. In **Somalia**, negotiations were needed with international actors, as well as within the clan system and local communities. In the **Middle East**, one approach developed by the United States (US) was to facilitate peace agreements between Israel and its neighbouring countries, independent of the Palestinians.

Sometimes peace accords can capture the broad spirit or framework of peace and guide the next steps without addressing issues in detail. The 1993 Oslo Accords—officially known as the **Declaration of Principles**—that initiated the Israeli-Palestinian 1994–2000 peace process offered no concrete details and were not legally binding. But they were the cornerstones of a longer-term negotiation effort or **peace process**. Peace accords often open the way to international assistance in the form of **peacekeeping** and peace support operations (see below and chapter on peace support operations).

Regardless of the political decisions made, negotiators have to prepare for "spoilers" (groups that have an interest in sabotaging the process) and public rejection of settlements. When the public has experienced significant trauma, it may not be ready to make compromises or accept a negotiated solution. It is the task of the leadership to generate support for peace. Where agreements are made in closed or even secret talks, gaining this support can be even more problematic, especially if those most affected by the conflict do not see signs of improvement. For example, during the Oslo process, Palestinians felt that they were

not gaining enough as the Israelis continued to build settlements in Palestinian territories. Israelis, on the other hand, felt that they were not gaining much, as they did not feel sufficiently secure. It is important to manage expectations and ensure that the public on either side of the conflict is aware of the approach being taken, the pace and the expected results.

Sometimes extremist groups will exploit public opinion as a way of breaking their promises. They will imply that the public does not favour negotiated solutions and use this as an excuse to generate more violence and attempt to derail talks. To avoid this in **Northern Ireland**, negotiators agreed to hold a referendum in the midst of the peace process, soon after all political parties signed the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. In the **referendum,** they asked the public to vote either "yes" in favour of the agreement and continuation, or "no" to stop the process. Seventy-one percent of votes in Northern Ireland and 94 percent in the Republic of Ireland were "yes." This gave the negotiators a mandate to continue the talks, and ensured that extremists could not use the public as an excuse to sabotage the process.

KEY STAGES IN NEGOTIATIONS AND PEACE PROCESSES

Few peace processes progress in an orderly manner. Typically there are fits and starts, times of advancement, followed by stagnation or even breakdown. In general, however, there are three key phases: pre-negotiations, negotiations and post-negotiations implementation.

Pre-Negotiations: Talks Before Talks

In many cases, before formal negotiations take place in public, a series of private or secret talks may occur. One aim of the pre-negotiations "talks before talks" phase is to "break the ice," allow parties to explore options for making peace, convey their concerns and understand

each other. An important goal of this phase is to ensure that parties are mutually committed to the peace process. Issues to be addressed include:

• logistics;

• location of talks;

• security for each party;

• participants;

• time frame;

• mediators and their roles and responsibilities;

• setting realistic goals;

• alleviating fears and building trust perhaps through conciliatory gestures or creating a space for dialogue where a level of frankness and truth about the actions of all sides can be articulated; and

• agreement on agenda topics, which can be framed as a "limited versus comprehensive approach"[2] and the order in which topics are discussed. Common issues include a ceasefire agreement, power-sharing and governance issues, human rights, demobilisation, justice and socioeconomic reforms (see related chapters on these issues). A limited agenda may focus on security and power-sharing issues leaving other matters for post-settlement discussions. A more comprehensive agenda may address social and economic reform within the framework of the peace talks.

The challenge is to ensure that the "pre-negotiations" period leads to formal negotiations. In many cases parties use pre-negotiations to stall peace talks or to reinforce armed efforts. The conditions set for talks should not hamper or limit opportunities for getting to actual negotiations, but should ease the way. In other words, talks before talks *should not just be talks about talks*.

Colombia: Creating Space for Dialogue and Talks Before Talks[3]

In 1999, under pressure from civil society groups and a public campaign that resulted in 10 million signatures in favour of peace talks, then-President Andrés Pastrana and the guerrilla movement FARC (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces) initiated a series of "dialogues." The process continued until 2002, with the involvement of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), thematic public dialogues that focused attention on the concerns of different sectors of society, and international support. However, the process failed to lead to formal negotiations, in part because neither side ceased the use of violence during the dialogues. Despite this, the dialogues set a clear precedent for future talks to be more inclusive of civil society and attuned to public demands.

Negotiations for Peace: The Talks

Official or "Track One": These are bilateral or multilateral negotiations between adversaries involving the leadership or their official representatives, from both or all sides, typically mediated by a third-party. The 1995 Dayton Peace Talks that ended the **Bosnian** war were mediated by officials from the "contact group" of nations including the US, Russia, Britain, France and Germany.

Track One and a Half: This involves unofficial interaction between adversaries in the hope of creating an environment where official processes can take place. In 1994, when US relations with **North Korea** were at a crisis point over nuclear proliferation issues, former US President Carter went to North Korea and negotiated an agreement that enabled the two sides to return to discussions. He did not represent the US government at the time, but because of his eminent status he had access to the highest levels on both sides and was able to resolve issues without risking dishonour or embarrassment for either side.

In **Guatemala,** the National Reconciliation Commission, with the support of the government, negotiated the Oslo Accord with the insurgency group, the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity. This accord opened a process of informal meetings between the insurgency and civil society organisations that contributed to the beginning of formal negotiations with the government.

Back-channel talks and **shuttle diplomacy** are variations on track one and a half. Negotiators undertake one-on-one discussions, conveying messages through intermediaries (third-party facilitators or mediators) until obstacles are redressed and space is created for the resumption of face-to-face talks. In the **Philippines,** official peace negotiations between the government and insurgency movements (the National Democratic Front and the Moro International Liberation Front) in the 1990s were characterised by "back-channelling," particularly when the formal negotiations stalled.

Unofficial or "Track Two": Track Two efforts do not replace official track one efforts, but ideally precede and complement them. They are often led by non-state actors and involve a wider range of parties with an interest in promoting negotiations. The Oslo peace process, involving Israelis and Palestinians through the 1990s, was initiated through Track Two efforts by Norwegian academics with contacts in both communities.

Multi-Track: This refers to the involvement of a variety of actors engaging in peacemaking activities at different levels of society—ranging from the Track One actors to local, national or international groups from civil society and other sectors. There are two guiding principles: 1. the greater the range of actors involved, the wider the sense of ownership and effort in resolving a conflict, and the greater the chance of attaining sustainable results; and 2. cooperation and coordination between a range of actors can draw on the strengths of each and help overcome their limitations. For example, religious leaders can influence their own constituencies, but may not hold sway with the business community, and vice versa. By having both sectors involved, there is a greater chance that a wider cross-section of people feel that they have a stake in the process. In **Guatemala** and **Northern Ireland**, civil society forums were established to promote wider societal involvement in the peace process. The terms "**third side**" or "**track three**" are sometimes used to describe the effort of engaging and uniting individuals at the community level to generate "people's power," public opinion and coalitions in support of peace.[4] Similarly some theorists state that multi-track efforts should aim to create "networks of effective action"[5] (see examples below).

From Words to Action: The Rocky Road to Implementation

Peace talks are often a climax—coming after months of preparation, secret negotiations and a degree of confidence-building. Not surprisingly a great deal of attention is paid to creating conditions conducive to success. But in many cases pitfalls arise once the agreements have been signed. At this point expectations are high, but the peace itself is fragile. It is also a time when **extremists** or **spoilers** can take advantage of the situation by taking violent action to force a breakdown of the process. In the **Middle East,** the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin by Israeli right-wing extremists altered the course of the process. Many observers believe that at that moment the spirit of the Oslo process was lost.

Parties to the conflict often play a "wait and see" game to assess whether their adversaries will take the first step toward implementing agreements. One major key step is to undertake **confidence-building measures** that offer tangible proof of the commitment to peace. Such measures can be taken prior to the start of talks—as in a ceasefire agreement or creating areas for safe passage. They can also be taken during talks. In **Guatemala**, a human rights accord was among the first documents to be signed in 1994. According to opposition groups, the government began implementing aspects of the Accord soon after its signing, fostering a more positive environment for the peace talks. Confidence-building measures can also be undertaken immediately after the signing of key agreements to demonstrate will and commitment to peace. Unfortunately, often agreements on paper are slow to affect people's lives. In **Northern Ireland**, although progress was made on a range of social and economic issues, on security issues including "decommissioning" of the British army and its bases, and the Irish Republican Army, there was little progress. This resulted in a faltering of the peace process, and combined with other factors, led to a resurgence of nationalism in 2003.

In most cases the failure of negotiations results not only in a resurgence of violence, but also in higher levels of violence. In effect if the trust that has been created is then broken, there is often a severe backlash and more intense violence. *Thus the costs of initiating peace negotiations without adequate preparation and commitment to concrete implementation are extremely high.*

2. WHO IS INVOLVED IN NEGOTIATION PROCESSES?

In general there are two categories of people involved: those who are actual stakeholders or parties to the conflict, and those who mediate and facilitate the process.

MEDIATORS AND FACILITATORS
In many cases, the UN and/or regional inter-governmental organisations act as key **mediators** in peace negotiations. In **El Salvador** the UN convened the parties, encouraged progress and helped resolve

obstacles. In **Sierra Leone** in 1996, the Commonwealth Secretariat was involved alongside the UN and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In most cases where the UN is involved, the Secretary General's **Special Representative** (SRSG) takes on the task of mediation and diplomacy. The SRSG can play a pivotal role in mediating, engaging in "shuttle diplomacy" between actors and conveying messages on behalf of the UN.

Third-party governments, such as Norway and the European Union (EU), often sponsor negotiations, fund the process and provide venues for meetings. At times, they also play a prominent role as mediators. When the 2002 peace talks started in **Sri Lanka** between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Norwegian government sponsored and facilitated the process.

In **Burundi,** a facilitation team made up of 18 African and European governments moderated the negotiations, alongside representatives from multilateral and regional international bodies.

Third-party civil society organisations have also facilitated a number of peace talks by helping to create an environment where talks can be held, providing a venue and bringing parties and mediators together. The opportunity arises because NGOs may have access to both sides of a conflict. In 1990, after years of ongoing contact through the church and humanitarian support, representatives of the lay Catholic community of Sant Egidio mediated talks between the government of **Mozambique** and the Resistëncia Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO).[6] The talks lasted two years and the accords were signed at Sant Egidio's headquarters in Rome, Italy.

In many instances, individuals who are known and trusted by both sides can be effective mediators. Sometimes they are people who are active and known locally. They are **insider neutrals**. These are people who, by virtue of living in the conflict area, have a profound interest in making peace, but are known to not take sides. For example, in Sri Lanka, Visaka Dharmadasa, founder of the Parents of Servicemen Missing in Action and the Association of War-Affected Women, has designed and facilitated track two dialogues, bringing together

West African Women as Ambassadors of Peace—The Mano River Story

Women were struggling for peace across the Mano River countries of **Sierra Leone**, **Liberia**, and **Guinea** throughout the 1990s. But their successes were short-lived as conflict in one country inevitably affected the others. In 1999, believing that the solution could be found through regional peace efforts, women from the three countries joined together to form the Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET). Lobbying regional security organisations, training women in communities, issuing public declarations, organising protests and directly meeting with leaders across the region became the network's trademark. In recognition of their important role in bringing the parties to the table, MARWOPNET was a signatory to the August 2003 peace agreement in Liberia. The UN recognised their efforts in December 2003, awarding them the annual United Nations Prize for Human Rights.

influential civil society leaders from both sides of the conflict. In 2002, as peace talks were faltering, the LTTE refused direct contact with the government, accusing them of non-compliance. Its leaders conveyed their concerns through Ms. Dharmadasa to the government, foreign embassy staff members, and Norwegian negotiators. Through 2004 she continued to be an impartial bridge between the parties.

Individuals can also be **outsider-neutrals**—those who have no direct stake in the conflict or peace but whose neutrality is trusted. At the height of negotiations between the apartheid government and leaders of the black community, a crisis arose between the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) regarding participation in elections. Seasoned international mediators including Henry Kissinger and Lord Carrington were unable to resolve the issue and left **South Africa**. But Washington Okumu, a Kenyan university professor, stayed behind to broker the talks and ultimately achieved an inclusive agreement. As an outsider—but an African—Okumu had a deep understanding of the cultural issues, and was trusted and respected by all sides.[7]

PARTICIPANTS AT THE TABLE

Peace talks are often differentiated as **exclusive** or **inclusive**. Exclusive talks involve armed and unarmed major parties to a conflict—typically political and military actors—while inclusive talks tend to include a broader range of actors.

Exclusive: In **Colombia** in 1999, the government agreed to talks with FARC, but not with other left-wing guerrilla groups or right-wing paramilitaries. In 2004, talks were being held with the paramilitary United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), but no other sector of the population.

Inclusive or Multi-Party: In contrast, there are many cases where the international community (the UN or other mediators) invites multiple political parties to the table. The All-Party **Burundi** Peace Talks in Arusha (1998–2000) included 19 political parties. As mediator in **Northern Ireland** (1996–1998), US Senator George Mitchell proposed that the top ten political parties bring two representatives to the negotiations. Elections were held to identify the ten parties.

The participation of armed factions is controversial in peace negotiations. Many political parties have strong affiliations or direct control over armed factions and thus represent them. However, participation by smaller armed groups is often problematic; they may be reluctant to give up the use of arms at the outset of talks, yet have the capacity to spoil the process. Among practitioners there is ongoing debate about the appropriateness of including militants and extremists in negotiations. The decision is typically dependent on the context and is never easy, but is nonetheless a key issue.

In **Sudan**, a series of parallel and consecutive negotiations have taken place whereby the government has engaged with different opposition and rebel groups separately. Women and civil society have been largely excluded from these processes.

Multi-Level and Multi-Track: These processes, as discussed above, happen rarely. In **South Africa**, the

anti-apartheid struggle mobilised people at all levels of society, including religious and tribal leaders, trade unions and community activists.

In **Guatemala**, the peace process started in 1987 with preliminary talks and ended in 1996 with a comprehensive peace agreement. It was exceptional in that it included a Civil Society Assembly of representatives from trade unions, human rights organisations, the women's movement, indigenous groups, the religious community and other non-state entities. They were able to make vital contributions to the process through recommendations to the negotiating parties. Although the Assembly did not have decision-making power, its presence and involvement ensured that agreements reached at the political level were endorsed by civil society. It was also effective in creating a public sense of ownership for the peace process and shared responsibility for its success.

Multi-track efforts also help provide a safety net. When negotiations at the higher levels stall, involvement by other parties and sectors ensures that the channels of communication are not entirely shut down.

MONITORS OF THE AGREEMENT

In worst-case scenarios, the lack of implementation leads to the re-emergence of armed conflict and even worse cycles of violence. But even in successful cases such as **Guatemala** and **South Africa**, implementation of the full peace agreement has been slow and at times non-existent. A key lesson that emerges is that parties to the conflict, and the public at large, must be made aware of the significant challenges that implementation brings, and consider establishing indicators to monitor progress.

As a first step, the **international community** may assist in monitoring **ceasefires**. Although the term peacekeeping is not mentioned in the UN Charter, extended peacekeeping and peace support operations have become a standard feature of UN work in conflict-affected countries, falling between **Chapter 6** and **Chapter 7** of the **UN Charter**.

- Chapter 6 outlines the UN's role in the "pacific" settlement of disputes. Peace missions here include fact-finding and observer missions.

- International peace enforcement missions are often deployed under Chapter 7 (articles 43–45) of the Charter that mandates use of UN force and can call upon member states to provide armed forces to maintain and restore peace.

Peacekeeping missions typically monitor compliance, create a buffer zone between warring parties (see chapter on peace support operations) and, depending on the scope of their mandate, assist in the implementation of peace agreements. In **Ethiopia** and **Eritrea**, the **African Union** (AU) proposed the establishment of a peacekeeping mission with a mandate to "monitor the cessation of hostilities…and ensure the observance of the security commitments agreed by the two Parties."[8] In other cases, monitoring mechanisms for the implementation of peace agreements may be noted within the peace accord. The August 2003 peace agreement in **Liberia** established an Implementation Monitoring Committee that included ECOWAS, the UN, the AU, the EU and the International Contact Group on Liberia (involving the US, France, Nigeria and Senegal among others). They meet regularly with the new government to assess and provide recommendations for the implementation of the accord.

Regional and local actors can also be involved in monitoring. Following the signing of the 1998 Lincoln Agreement to end the **Bougainville** conflict, the Peace Monitoring Group was established, comprising the military and civilians from countries in the Pacific region (Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu). Its mandate included monitoring the ceasefire, serving as a link to the general population and assisting the implementation of the peace agreement. In the **Philippines**, Local Monitoring Teams (LMT) were established in August 2001 to monitor the security situation throughout Mindanao; they included representatives of local government, members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, NGOs and the religious sector. Where the LMTs were not active, grassroots groups formed "Bantay Ceasefire" (ceasefire watch) to monitor both sides. Bantay volunteers, including members of local community groups and NGOs, documented and reported violations and sought to complement the official LMTs.[9]

3. WHY DO NEGOTIATION PROCESSES EXCLUDE WOMEN?

Women remain largely excluded from negotiations despite their attempts in many conflict areas to participate and despite international policies, which explicitly call for women's involvement in decision-making at national and international levels. This marginalisation is problematic and can generate vicious exclusionary cycles.

On one hand, to ensure their concerns are addressed, it is necessary to have "strong" women's representation at the table. The strength can come from the number of women at the table representing all sides so that their viewpoints are heard. Strength can also come by ensuring that the women present are not merely observers but have decision-making power. It is acknowledging that women have contributions to make on a range of issues, from security to power-sharing, most of which affect all members of society.

On the other hand, to ensure strong representation, other stakeholders need to acknowledge that women's contributions are an essential component of the process. In most cases, however, neither the local parties to a conflict (i.e. the government or non-state parties to the conflict) nor international mediators acknowledge this. In fact, in cases like **Liberia**, even when women have played a role, their recommendations have been excluded from the final agreements.

In effect, when women are excluded, the differential impact of the decisions on men and women is not fully understood, and in most cases women's rights are not overtly addressed. Moreover, women's exclusion from negotiations often results in their exclusion from post conflict reconstruction planning and implementation. Particularly in post war situations where women make up the majority of a country's population, the marginalisation of women means squandering critical human resources.

REASONS AND EXCUSES

While theorists and even practitioners lament the exclusion of women and civil society from peace processes, in most cases the reality is that seats at the peace table are given to those who have the political power to implement agreements, or those who have the power to threaten a veto and spoil the process. Even when there is recognition of the rights of women and the need for a more inclusive process, it is often cast aside in the process of bargaining. Thus the influence that women and civil society may have in sustaining the process is not considered a priority. A variety of excuses are given for the exclusion of women:

- Gender inequality and women's exclusion is embedded in local culture, and the peace table is not the place to address these "cultural norms;" promoting the participation of women can alienate some leaders and put the peace process at risk. A related argument is that international conventions and laws interfere with local culture; yet the same reasoning is not used for other issues.

- "Women leaders aren't representative of the broad population. They are elites. Their views and interests are no different to the men."[10] Interestingly, the same argument, while often true for men, is never used as a rationale for their exclusion. Moreover, in many cases (e.g. Sierra Leone, Burundi, South Africa) women at the national level had strong ties with grassroots movements.

- Women are not involved in the fighting, and so should not be involved in peacemaking.

- In the case of liberation struggles often the excuse used is that "liberation comes first," then "gender equality," yet time and again, women have found that if the two issues are not addressed in parallel, gender equality falls by the wayside soon after liberation.

- There is a prevailing belief that peace accords are gender-neutral. There is an implicit notion that references to human rights and justice encompass everyone, including women.

- In male-dominated societies where women have not been involved in political affairs, often those who do enter the space are viewed with skepticism and distrust by other women and men.

- Finally, it is often argued that women are not inherently more peaceful or "pro-peace" than men. This is true in many instances—indeed women have been strong supporters of many wars, have played a multitude of roles in conflict situations, and are not necessarily gender-sensitive. But it is

still the case that without women, gendered perspectives are more likely to be excluded or ignored in peace agreements.

In addition to these externally imposed obstacles, women and civil society groups themselves also sometimes show reluctance to engage directly, or succumb to pressures and withdraw. Common factors that affect them include:

• being too absorbed in local issues, losing sight of national and international processes, or excluding themselves from politics that they deem to be unethical;

• feeling insecure about the skills and knowledge required to participate (although this concern does not seem to afflict male warriors). In other words, women who are representative of the wider community often lack the confidence to engage at the national and international levels (with training this can be resolved);

• feeling pressure from male counterparts who fear the notion of sharing power with women after the negotiations and thus press them to withdraw;

• not having adequate representation. In many instances when male leaders are pressed into nominating women for negotiations, they choose the weakest. In this way they control the women representatives and can argue that the women made no difference to the process. This is particularly damaging for women leaders in civil society who find that women negotiators are unaware or unwilling to ensure that gendered perspectives or women's rights are included in discussions regarding social, economic or political reform;

• not having the necessary support from civil society organisations that are not focused on peace issues. Often, civil society organisations are overburdened groups and are unable or unwilling to accept the direct linkages between peacemaking and their area of primary concern (be it the environment, health or other issues), thus their support for peace movements wanes if results are not tangible in the short term. This lack of staying power is detrimental to those who are dedicated peace activists; and

• receiving little or no support from the international community, particularly from mediators or high level personnel who are unfamiliar with gender issues and unwilling to engage with women.

OVERCOMING THESE OBSTACLES

In conflict areas worldwide, women have developed and adopted strategies to overcome these obstacles.

In **South Africa**, women across the political spectrum worked together to establish a women's constituency that resonated with the political parties. Through national and local organisations, they consulted with some three million women over two years to develop a common agenda for women.[11] The document became an important tool during negotiations and constitution-drafting. Simultaneously, they worked across political parties at the negotiations to demand 50 percent representation. Of seven sub-councils established to decide on key issues, and to monitor and implement the transition process, one was on gender. Its mandate was to monitor the policies emerging from the other councils to ensure that all matters being addressed (e.g. national security issues, elections, etc.) were gender-sensitive. One of the reasons for the success of South African women was that they did not focus their attention just on women's rights issues. They played a key role in the broader struggle for liberation, winning the respect of their male counterparts, and making contributions to all issues addressed in the negotiations.

In **Northern Ireland**, Catholic and Protestant community-based women peace activists lobbied political parties with their agenda. When they were ignored, the women formed their own political party—the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC)—and won enough votes to secure a seat at the formal peace table. NIWC representatives played a critical role in mediating between parties from both sides, especially the extremists.[12]

In **Burundi,** with support from international NGOs, women formed networks across political party lines but were barred from the formal negotiations that began in 1998. In response, they adopted different strategies including lobbying national party members in the corridors outside the negotiating rooms and seeking out international mediators and support from

the UN (UNIFEM, the UN's Development Fund for Women, in particular, played a critical role). In 2000, the All-Party Burundi Women's Conference was co-hosted by UNIFEM and the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation; each party had two female representatives. They developed a set of recommendations that were included in the final peace accords in August 2000.

In **Somalia,** where a clan system exists, women have a particularly important role in conflict resolution, as they maintain close relations within their own clan, as well as the clan into which they marry. Because of their cross-clan allegiances, individual women have been able to facilitate peace processes by carrying messages between fighting parties, ensuring the safety of travellers passing through clan territory, and interceding among combatants. Organisations comprised of women from different clans and united in opposition to war have sought participation in peace and political processes, mobilising and training community mediators, and representing women as the "sixth clan."

In **Colombia,** following the collapse of the government/FARC dialogue in 2002, women's groups across the country mobilised to demand a return to negotiations. They led peace demonstrations involving thousands, formed national and regional coalitions, and developed a 12-point agenda for future talks. They are now at the forefront of the civil society peace effort.

In **Guatemala,** the only female representative at the official negotiations became increasingly aware of the gender dimensions of the process as the talks progressed. Once aware of the discrimination facing women, she drew on the proposals of the women's rights movement to integrate gender perspectives into the final agreements.[13]

In the **Georgia-Abkhazia** conflict in the Caucasus, women's organisations jointly wrote to the UN Secretary General requesting that he send senior women representatives to the UN mission in their country. In 2004, in part as a result of this advocacy, two women hold senior posts in the mission.

In **Sri Lanka,** the Norwegian sponsors proposed a gender subcommittee made up of representatives from the LTTE and the government to provide advice. International efforts on the part of NGOs such as

International Alert (IA) and **Women Waging Peace (Waging)** have been critical in raising awareness and support for women's participation in peace processes. In 1999 IA's Women Building Peace Campaign played a pivotal role in mobilising women worldwide and in creating the **NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security** that was central to building UN and governmental support for a Security Council resolution.[14] Waging's advocacy efforts have been critical in influencing the US government's agenda, particularly in supporting women in **Iraq**'s reconstruction throughout 2003–04. The global networks that IA and Waging fostered have enabled women peace activists to exchange strategies regionally and to gain access to international policy-makers. The Women Peacemakers' Program (WPP) of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) and Femmes Afrique Solidarité (FAS) are other effective entities providing training and capacity-building to women activists.

4. HOW DO WOMEN CONTRIBUTE TO NEGOTIATION PROCESSES?

Where women have mobilised publicly and been present as informal advisors (including as corridor lobbyists—waiting in corridors and lobbying politicians as they emerge from negotiations) or formal negotiators, their contributions have been important in a number of ways noted below.

WOMEN AS CONVENERS AND CATALYSTS

Women's protests and actions have in many cases served as a catalyst for peace talks. In the 1980s the silent protests of the Mothers of the Disappeared in **Argentina** dealt a heavy blow to the military dictatorship by exposing the scale of its human rights abuses, and generating national and international public support. In the **Middle East,** prior to the Oslo peace process, Israeli and Palestinian women worked together on joint initiatives including protests and advocacy. Through the Jerusalem Link group, the coordinating body of two independent women's centres (the Israeli Bat Shalom and the Palestinian Jerusalem Center for Women) were often the first to publicise viable solutions to core issues. They were among the first groups to promote the idea of Jerusalem as the shared capital of two states. Following the collapse of the Oslo process in 2000,

the Jerusalem Link continued to press for a return to negotiations, calling for the creation of an International Women's Commission for Peace in the Middle East that would advocate not only for the inclusion of more women in negotiations, but also for shadow talks to take place with formal recognition from the official parties.

In 1999, following nearly a decade of war and broken peace accords, the government of **Sierra Leone** and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) signed the Lomé peace agreement. Just months later, however, the RUF was flouting the ceasefire provisions. In May 2000, a group of elderly women came together, demanding a meeting with RUF leader Foday Sankoh. On arriving at the RUF compound, they were mistreated and insulted. Frustrated, the women tried a different tactic. They collectively hitched up their skirts, bent over and bared themselves to Sankoh and his coterie. In Sierra Leone, such an action by women is the worst curse that can be brought upon anyone. The news had a galvanising effect on Sierra Leoneans. They had an obligation to uphold the women's honour and support the curse. The women's actions also gave people the courage to stand up to the RUF. Coinciding with the arrival of the new UN mission and British Special Forces, the women's protest, together with subsequent public demonstrations, culminated in Sankoh's arrest and a turn towards peace.[15]

In 2001, as **Sri Lanka** was entering its twentieth year of civil war, a leading businesswoman and President of the NGO Sri Lanka First, launched a massive public awareness campaign, calling on all Sri Lankans to take action in support of negotiations. The Stand for Peace campaign reached a climax at noon on 19 September 2001 when more than one million Sri Lankans across the country left their homes and offices to stand publicly, holding hands for peace and demonstrating their desire for an end to the conflict. This pressure led political leaders to put aside their own agendas and begin negotiations.[16]

In many cases women's power and influence is directly a result of their purported powerlessness in the formal political sphere. In places as diverse as **Colombia**, the **Caucasus,** and Nagaland in northeast **India,** women have greater freedom of movement than men in conflict zones; this enables them to establish contact with both peace activists and governmental or international actors. They are also often deemed to have no vested interest in the war, and are trusted more. In the Caucasus, where there are a number of "frozen" conflicts (i.e. no war but no political settlement either), women have been critical in forming cross-regional networks, leading to greater communication and understanding across conflict lines. They have also created mobile groups that visit areas, such as **Chechnya**, where conflict is ongoing, to monitor developments including the impact of war.

WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES ON PEACE AND SECURITY

It is extremely difficult to quantify the difference that women make to peace negotiations, particularly given the limited numbers of women that have participated in such processes. Evidence gathered in testimonies worldwide, however, indicates that when considering peace agendas, women are often credited for bringing an understanding of the root causes of conflict, and for speaking effectively about the impact of violence on daily life, relating the experiences and voices of ordinary people—men and women, young and old. They tend to have a holistic approach to resolving conflict, often motivated by the dream of a peaceful future, particularly for their children. Women also tend to focus on practical issues related to quality of life and human security, rather than control over political power. They also bring greater recognition of the discrimination and abuse faced by women and other marginalised sectors. Finally, women recognise the importance of building positive relations while negotiating for peace and security. Often they focus on reaching out to negotiators through their personal identity or reference to family.

In **El Salvador**, in negotiations over the reintegration of fighters, women leaders and negotiators of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) were critical in ensuring that not only fighters, but also men and women who had provided support *(tenedores)*, were included in the programs. "A USAID representative involved in the implementation process recalls the "professional" calibre of women negotiators, who came to the talks with a clear "sense of responsibility" and awareness that "others were depending on them."[17] Access to land, supplies for the home, and training programs

were included in the final reintegration packages.

In **Mindanao**, reconstruction and reintegration began after 28 years of protracted struggle for autonomy and a 1996 peace agreement between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). However, while the political landscape changed, it was clear to women in particular, that the MNLF was still defining its ideals through revolution, rather than embracing a culture of peace and tolerance. The wife of a leading MNLF figure initiated contact with a national peace institute. In November 1997, a group of Bangsamoro Women from the Special Zone of Peace and Development areas in Mindanao gathered to reflect on, and promote a culture of peace to counter the culture of violence defined by guns and war.

Elsewhere women's participation has been effective in highlighting and addressing issues of particular concern to women. In **Guatemala**, as a result of the participation and influence of women in the peace process, the accords include the commitment to reduce maternal mortality by 50 percent, create laws and mechanisms to outlaw sexual harassment and create the Office for the Defense of Indigenous Women and the National Women's Forum.

ENHANCING THE PROCESS

In cases where women have been involved in formal peace negotiations, in their efforts to generate support for the process they have been inclusive and consultative.

Inclusive: Women peacemakers tend to be more willing to talk to all sides in a conflict. In part because of their own experience of marginalisation, they understand the need to reach out and hear the voices of all concerned. In **Northern Ireland**, the political message of the NIWC was human rights, inclusion, and equality. At first, they were insulted and accused of being traitors by other parties in the negotiations. But during the 1996–98 talks, they were the only party that was willing to meet with all sides. They became trusted mediators during the negotiations. Their demands included the establishment of a civic forum in which different sectors of society could voice their opinions and their support for

victims of violence, integrated education and mixed housing. In 1998, their public campaigns were critical in mobilising people to vote in favour of the Good Friday Agreement to keep the peace process moving.

Consultative*:* In many cases, women peacemakers have emerged from community-based movements and civil society. Because of their strong ties to their constituents, they initiate consultative processes to hear opinions and share their own positions. This provides a critical channel through which the public can be informed and support the process. In 1999, as **Burundi**'s peace process was under way, Burundian women, with support from UNIFEM and international NGOs such as IA and Search for Common Ground, and working through national networks, were informing women at the grassroots level of the issues being addressed, seeking their opinions and lobbying the international community to gain access to the talks. In **Bougainville**, following the peace talks in 1998 that ended a decade-long independence struggle, women's organisations led awareness-raising meetings in various communities; they were the only leaders who had been at the peace talks who returned to inform the population of the substance and decisions emerging from the negotiations.

Empathic and Trustworthy: New studies emerging on cross-cultural negotiations unrelated to peace and conflict issues indicate that women are perceived to be more trustworthy.[18] Recent qualitative studies on the role of women in post conflict **Rwanda** and **Cambodia** also indicate that in conflict-affected societies women are more trusted than men to be honest and incorruptible.[19] One common reason given is that they are not as implicated in violence as men.[20] While this is still highly debatable and difficult to prove, it is nonetheless important to highlight, given that trust is a key element in effective negotiations.

In a 2003 book, *The Essential Difference,* psychologist Simon Baron-Cohen provides empirical data to show that women and girls tend to be better at empathising and communicating than their male counterparts.[21] In interviews conducted with women and men involved in peace

negotiations, many note that women are better at listening, allaying fears and therefore building trust.[22] In **South Africa**, one negotiator noted that women participants used experiences and skills acquired in the domestic sphere, such as caring for family, listening to the elderly and empathising with children in their interactions at the talks. "The fact that the women were nurturing and caring became hugely positive attributes. The process became one of listening to what other people were saying, listening to their fears, even if you disagreed with them. People came out feeling that their concerns were being dealt with. It wasn't just posturing."[23]

Empathy itself is an important ingredient for acknowledging the humanity of an adversary and in connecting with them on issues of mutual concern. In **Northern Ireland**, women at the negotiations drew attention to the human costs of conflict and to the impact that fear, hatred and violence had on families. In **Bougainville**, when the two sides met, it was women who were able to break down barriers most effectively; so much so that the Bougainville Transitional Government (which had three female delegates out of a total of 27) called for four more women to join their official delegation.[24]

CONTAINING VIOLENCE AND CREATING SAFE SPACE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The grassroots and local conflict resolution efforts of women are among the least documented and most under-appreciated aspects of their peace work. In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, throughout the 1996–98 war women were key members of community-based groups that sought to re-establish dialogue between rival tribes in the eastern parts of the country and negotiate with militias to spare villages. Following national peace talks in 2002, the region remained insecure, with a particularly high incidence of rape. Representatives from the two groups formed a protection committee to travel together, negotiating and resolving disputes as they arose.[25]

Similarly in **Colombia,** studies published in 2004 document the critical role that informal women's groups played in negotiating humanitarian agreements with guerrillas to enable passage of food and medicine to villages.[26] In the Mano River region of **West Africa,** women's networks operate under the assumption that conflicts must be resolved locally, to limit escalation to the regional or national levels. In **Cambodia,** where violence has permeated society through decades of war, women represent the majority of actors in non-violent conflict resolution efforts at the community level, often mediating between security personnel and local populations.[27]

5. WHAT INTERNATIONAL POLICIES EXIST IN SUPPORT OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES?

In recent years a number of resolutions and international policy frameworks have emerged that specifically call for the inclusion of women in peace talks (see chapter on international mechanisms). Key international policies include:

• Although the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** does not reference peace talks,

    - Article 7 demands that states allow women "to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government…"[28] and

    - Article 8 calls on state parties to "take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organisations."[29]

• The **1995 Beijing Platform for Action** states that "the full participation [of women] in decision-making, conflict prevention and resolution and all other peace initiatives [is] essential to the realization of lasting peace."[30] **Recommendation E.1** demands that states "increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels."[31]

- UN Security Council **Resolution 1325** (2000) mandates that all actors adopt "measures that support local women's peace initiatives…and that involve women in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreement."[32]

- To underscore their commitment to the international frameworks, many regional multilateral institutions including the European Commission, the Organization of American States and others have also adopted resolutions calling for the inclusion of women in peace processes.

UNIFEM plays a leading role in promoting the implementation of Resolution 1325 by advocating on women's behalf at international forums and supporting women's efforts to enter peace processes across the world, from Burundi to Afghanistan. The **Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues** (OSAGI) also plays a key role in advancing the implementation of Resolution 1325 within the UN. Since 2004, the UN's **Department for Political Affairs** (DPA), which has primary responsibility for UN engagement in peacemaking, has prioritised gender mainstreaming and is attempting to be more inclusive of women in its peacemaking activities.

6. TAKING STRATEGIC ACTION: WHAT CAN WOMEN PEACEBUILDERS DO?

1. Mobilise people in your community to raise awareness and visible support for peace negotiations.

2. Build a strong coalition and constituency of supporters, bringing together a range of civil society actors and identifying key actors who can be "connectors" and those that are "dividers."

3. Advocate for multi-track peace processes that include civil society and women in the peace process, drawing on examples from other countries to demonstrate the effectiveness of this strategy.

4. Open track two or "back-channel" talks, drawing on the network of women activists across conflict lines.

5. Publicise CEDAW and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 as international laws that call for women's inclusion in peace processes and decision-making and require compliance by the state.

    - Develop a media campaign and generate support among journalists covering the issues.

    - Hold community-level meetings.

6. Develop a common agenda, highlighting issues that are critical to women and that must be included in negotiations.

    - Ensure that you are aware of, and have positions on, *all* issues being addressed at the talks (see other chapters).

    - Reach out to UNIFEM and other international entities for support and expert advice.

    - Initiate simulated negotiations to strengthen women's capacities for formal processes.

    - Where women negotiators do exist, reach out to them to provide support, expertise and advocacy on gender issues.

7. Seek out "champions" and supporters of women's participation among national figures (men and women) such as politicians, religious leaders, media and business personalities.

    - Inform them about the issues that need to be addressed and ways in which women's participation can improve the process.

    - Call for a "gender quota" at the negotiations.

    - Demand senior female representation from international organisations be involved (e.g. UN Envoys or Special Representatives).

8. Develop alliances between women in civil society, government, and parties to the conflict and create a cross-sectoral action plan that would ensure that gender perspectives and women's rights issues are included in all areas of the talks.

9. Strategise to join political parties involved in the negotiations so as to promote your agenda from within the structures. If they are unwilling to embrace your agenda, consider alternative measures, such as creating a civil society dialogue, asking for the support of respected national institutions and leaders or creating your own political party.

10. Reach out to the international community and mediators, including representatives from UNDPA, demand inclusion and cite Resolution 1325 as a commitment that must be honoured.

11. Ensure that the public mobilisation does not end with the signing of the agreement.

12. Develop programmes to ensure monitoring, compliance and implementation of the agreements and promote civil society participation.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND MORE INFORMATION?

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ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
AU	African Union
AUC	United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
DPA	United Nations Department of Political Affairs
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FARC	Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces
FAS	Femmes Afrique Solidarité
FMLN	Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front
IFOR	International Fellowship of Reconciliation
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
LMT	Local Monitoring Teams
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MARWOPNET	Mano River Women's Peace Network
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIWC	Northern Ireland Women's Coalition
OSAGI	Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women of the United Nations
RENAMO	Resistëncia Nacional Moçambicana
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations
UN	United Nations
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WPP	Women Peacemakers' Programme

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