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# development dialogue



**Inclusive Peacebuilding:  
Recognised but not Realised**



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# development dialogue

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# Inclusive Peacebuilding: Recognised but not Realised

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# Foreword

Common knowledge holds that sustainable peace rests on a solid foundation of broad participation across society. Furthermore, local ownership is often identified as a prerequisite for successful peacebuilding. So why produce a volume that underlines what can be perceived as conventional wisdom? The answer is quite simple – as long as the concept of local ownership is considered synonymous with national ownership and continues to be claimed by national governments, challenged by civil society organisations and questioned by international partners, more knowledge is needed. Local ownership continues to be translated in one's own favour, paid lip service or ignored, and has not genuinely become common practice. The rationale for producing this volume is, therefore, that we all need to listen harder and learn more from specific country situations in order to be better at building and supporting peace.

The very opening of the UN Charter – *We the peoples* – underscores the fundamental democratic principle of inclusive participation in development and in sustaining peace. With escalating inter- and intrastate conflicts, however, we recognise, with remorse, that the UN has not been able to live up to its purpose of saving future generations from the scourge of war, and that peacebuilding efforts must be further strengthened and intensified at all levels – internationally, regionally, nationally and locally.

While the root causes of every armed conflict differ, they share one thing – the devastating impact on children, youth, women and men across society. The purpose of this book is, simply, that while the processes of building peace are unique to each context and situation, we must learn from what works in terms of ensuring, encouraging and strengthening inclusion. So what does inclusivity mean in practice, and how can we overcome the challenges it poses? With this volume we hope to inspire policy-makers and practitioners to delve into these questions. We hope to contribute to a better understanding of ways in which inclusive peacebuilding efforts could be systematically planned, thoroughly implemented and broadly institutionalised. After all, the importance of inclusivity might be a given, but that it is put into practice is not.

Some say, with irony, that peacebuilding is not rocket science. True, we have long ago learned to use rockets both to carry humans into space and to cause human destruction; meanwhile, we have failed to fulfil the mission that is at the very core of the UN Charter. The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation is proud to present a small but important contribution to the ongoing discussion around building and sustaining peace through participation, representation and engagement – or, in short, inclusivity.

*Henrik Hammargren*  
Executive Director  
Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation



# Introduction

Building peace in today's conflicts calls for long-term commitment to establishing an infrastructure across the levels of a society, an infrastructure that empowers the resources for reconciliation from within that society and maximizes the contribution from outside<sup>1</sup>.

*John Paul Lederach*

The world is going through a turbulent time, with populations across the globe experiencing violence and insecurity. Data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme show that 2014 had the highest number of people killed in organised violence since the Cold War. In June 2015, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reported that the number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people worldwide had risen to more than 51 million, which is the highest level since World War II. The nature of global conflict is understood to have changed and is continuously evolving, showing little respect for international borders or traditional definitions. For the international community engaged in peacebuilding these developments raise existential questions. Proliferating discussions and efforts framed as countering or preventing violent extremism exemplify an effort to develop new approaches to address violence and to build conflict-resilient communities.

It is in this context that the United Nations has been going through a period of critical reflection on its own performance, recognising that many of the structures, practices and policies for addressing violence conflict and sustaining peace are outdated, insufficient or simply inadequate. Three separate reviews on the Organisation's work on peace and security were implemented in 2015: a Review of UN Peace Operations, a Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture and a Global Study on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The reports from all three of these reviews conclude that there is a need for drastic change but also an opportunity for the UN to redefine its role, actions and instruments for building and sustaining peace.

At the same time, in a historic moment, the international community has agreed to a new framework to guide global development for the coming 15 years. Known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this framework is for the first time universally applicable, while taking into account different national realities, and recognises the direct link between peace, justice and development. The SDGs are inclusive in that they state that no person or country should be left behind and that all people and all countries bear a responsibility to deliver the global vision that the 2030 Agenda presents, with 'peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence' in clear focus. This ambition, captured specifically in Goal 16, is a challenge posed to all countries, whether they are considered fragile or not. Against this background, and informed by years of country experiences, the aforementioned reviews have contributed to a broadened understanding of what peacebuilding entails.

One of the key messages of the report by the Advisory Group of Experts (AGE) for the Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture is that peacebuilding ‘needs to be liberated from the strict limitation to post-conflict contexts’ and, rather, be conceived as sustaining peace with a strong emphasis on conflict prevention and requiring broad and inclusive participation<sup>2</sup>. It goes further to stress that sustaining peace is a key shared responsibility of the entire UN system under its founding Charter and that to be successful it must focus on addressing root causes, with efforts that transcend traditional spheres of development, human rights and humanitarian action.

For peacebuilding processes to lead to sustainable peace, participation and engagement from a broad spectrum of society is required over an extended period of time. Peacebuilding practitioners, researchers and policy-makers have recognised the importance of inclusivity and regularly discuss best practices and methods within various fora at the United Nations, as well as in civil society circles, for increasing engagement in peace processes. The intention of this *Development Dialogue* volume is not to reiterate this imperative, but rather to highlight some of the gaps between that acknowledgment and the practice of engaging local stakeholders and to explore approaches for overcoming the challenges that arise from working inclusively on peacebuilding. The articles also offer suggestions for the international community as it revises its peacebuilding institutions and policies about how to move from token engagement to genuine participation in supporting local efforts to build peace.

This volume aims to contribute to the discourse on how to support and practice inclusive peacebuilding by unpacking and problematising some of the key issues that are widely recognised as critical but often poorly implemented, such as participation of women at all levels, the engagement of youth, the roles of religious and traditional leaders, the importance of supporting existing community structures and potential positive contributions of the private sector. In addition, this volume adds to the increasingly loud call for the international community to enshrine the principle of inclusive local ownership and leadership in all its peacebuilding efforts.

## Concepts and definitions

**Inclusivity:** In his 2012 report *Peacebuilding in the Aftermath of Conflict*, the UN Secretary-General highlighted inclusivity as a priority and called on the international community to identify entry points for inclusion and social dialogue. Inclusivity was defined as ‘the extent and manner in which the views and needs of parties to conflict and other stakeholders are represented, heard and integrated into a peace process’<sup>3</sup>. That definition is adopted here, although in the case studies the focus is mainly on local communities and local civil society.

**Peacebuilding:** There are many ways to define peacebuilding, and the various actors consulted in the process of producing this volume all have their own understanding of its meanings. The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation has adopted the definition used by the UN Peacebuilding Support Office, namely: ‘Peacebuilding is...the continuum of strategy, processes and activities aimed at sustaining peace over the long term with a clear focus on reducing chances for the relapse into conflict... [It] is useful to see peacebuilding as a broader policy framework that strengthens the synergy among the related efforts of conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, recovery and development, as part of a collective and sustained effort to build lasting peace’<sup>4</sup>.

With this definition as a broad starting-point, local partners were, however, encouraged to explore how this definition held up in their own context and what linguistic challenges they would face. As is shown in the case studies section, at the community level the distinction between peacebuilding and development efforts is not always made. It is also worth noting that several of the challenges identified are not specific to internationally supported peacebuilding efforts, but apply to development cooperation at large.

**Local:** The term ‘local’ is used imprecisely as a marker for actors and situations close to and directly affected by the problems of and solutions to conflict, as compared to international, regional and national stakeholders with an often-temporary involvement in the situation at hand.

## Structure of the Volume

The first part of the volume, *Inclusivity in theory, policy and practice*, starts with a historical reflection by Henning Melber that takes us back to Dag Hammarskjöld's time as UN Secretary-General. Melber explains how Hammarskjöld's open and principled approach was an asset in the UN's mediation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, and should serve as an inspiration today. In the following article, Jerry McCann draws on his practical experience of implementing peacebuilding initiatives around the world to illustrate how genuinely local ownership is key to inclusivity, and elaborates on specific considerations for ensuring such local ownership. Thania Paffenholz and Nick Ross move on to present research that examines the 'why', 'who', 'when' and 'how' of inclusion during the different stages of political peace negotiations, as well as process and context factors necessary for success.

Part 2 of the volume presents *Country case studies* from Liberia, Timor-Leste, Somalia and Burma/Myanmar. In the spirit of facilitating the input of local voices and perspectives in international policy discussions, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation teamed up with local civil society organisations to consult local communities and other stakeholders about challenges to, and opportunities for, inclusive peacebuilding. Despite the different contexts and histories of the four countries, some common challenges to inclusive peacebuilding recur in the studies, such as the tension between national and local ownership, a sense of disconnect and exclusion among local communities from capital-based political elites and NGOs, the positive contributions youth can make, the importance of funding for and capacity-building of local structures and organisations, and the connections between peacebuilding and broader development concerns.

In Part 3, *Thematic elaborations*, some of the key issues and stakeholders emphasised in the country case studies are further explored. In his contribution on religious and traditional peacemakers, Antti Pentikäinen stresses the need for the international community to recognise and engage systematically with local traditional and religious leaders, who have legitimacy among and access to local communities, highlighting cases from Somalia, Syria and Yemen. A further example of how tribal and religious leaders use traditional practices to intervene in social, religious and legal conflicts in an inclusive manner is offered in the article on the Kirkuk Council of Notables in northern Iraq.

The crucial role of youth and women in peacebuilding is explored in three articles: Thiyumi Seranathna addresses the complexities of women's inclusion in peace processes by presenting case study research from four countries, Sierra James exemplifies creative peacebuilding work empowering and inspiring youth, women and children in Timor-Leste, and Herbert Bangura stresses the underutilised potential of youth in Africa.

The civil society perspectives of James, Bangura and Pentikäinen are complemented by an article by Thania Paffenholz that systematically outlines various functions played by civil society in peace processes and models for civil society inclusion in negotiations. The questions of when and how civil society actors should be engaged is further reflected on in the context of Burma/Myanmar in interview pieces with Lian Sakhong, an ethnic leader and negotiator, and Paul Sein Twa, a civil society activist,

both from ethnic minorities. In addition to sharing their perspectives on inclusivity in Burma's peace negotiations, they discuss the international community's influence and the role of diaspora groups.

The volume ends with two articles that elaborate on central aspects of the 2030 Agenda, namely the universality of its goals and the importance of engagement by the private sector. Christelle Mestre and Renée Larivière reflect on the applicability of peacebuilding experiences from conflict contexts in addressing issues of social cohesion in 'peaceful' European cities, providing examples from a pilot project implemented in a Stockholm suburb. Finally, Jolyon Ford argues that the private sector has been an under-appreciated stakeholder in peacebuilding and sets out to identify some of the gaps between the rhetoric on greater private sector engagement and practical implications for including business actors in peacebuilding.

The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation hopes that the articles in this volume add some useful new ideas, examples and suggestions to the ongoing discourse about ways to work more inclusively in efforts to sustain peace. Rather than merely presenting interesting reading and restating what has been said many times before, our aim is for the volume to stimulate debate, reflection and further inquiry during a series of launch events planned in connection with its publication, and to actively feed into the discussions over the coming months and years on implementation of recommendations from the three aforementioned reviews. As countries, communities and individuals renew their efforts to address conflict, locally and globally, and strive to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that are free from fear and violence, they will need an efficient UN that plays a central role in ensuring sustainable peace. May the decision-makers who hold the power to effect the needed changes find inspiration in the following words of Dag Hammarskjöld:

Our work for peace must begin within the private world of each one of us. To build for man a world without fear, we must be without fear. To build a world of justice, we must be just. And how can we fight for liberty if we are not free in our own minds? How can we ask others to sacrifice if we are not ready to do so?... Only in true surrender to the interest of all can we reach that strength and independence, that unity of purpose, that equity of judgment which are necessary if we are to measure up to our duty to the future, as men of a generation to whom the chance was given to build in time a world of peace<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1997), xvi.

<sup>2</sup> The full text of the AGE Report, published as A/69/968-S/2015/490, can be found at [www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/review2015.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/review2015.shtml).

<sup>3</sup> A/67/499:11

<sup>4</sup> [www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/faq.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/faq.shtml).

<sup>5</sup> UN Press Release SG/360 (22 December 1953).

**1**

# Inclusivity in theory, policy and practice



# Revisiting the 'Hammarskjöld approach'

Henning Melber

During a debate in the UN Security Council in 2011, the Chinese Permanent Representative Li Baodong demanded that the peacekeeping operations of the organisation 'should adhere to the Hammarskjöld principles'<sup>1</sup>. On the occasion of a United Nations Day event the same year, the Cyprus Foreign Minister Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis praised Dag Hammarskjöld as 'the dove of preventive diplomacy'<sup>2</sup>. Finally, when Pope Francis addressed the 2015 UN General Assembly, the only former Secretary-General he mentioned by name was Dag Hammarskjöld<sup>3</sup>. These are a few examples that testify to the lasting legacy he created during his eight years in office (1953–1961).

Hammarskjöld was guided by strong personal values and ethics, and committed to global governance and a notion of social justice, integrity and international solidarity<sup>4</sup>. Applying such normative values was also a deliberate effort to involve, consult and thereby include all those affected, so that no party felt side-lined, ignored or bypassed. He realised that lasting solutions required a common sense of purpose and that inclusivity was an important component in mediating, peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts. With a background as a high-ranking Swedish civil servant (who had never been a member of a political party but was directly involved in creating the Swedish welfare state as a trained economist)<sup>5</sup>, Hammarskjöld was impregnated by the Swedish practice of broad participation by social agencies and representatives of the people in negotiation processes, seeking to find common ground.

During his terms in office, Hammarskjöld and his team at the Secretariat introduced several pioneering innovations to the proactive role of the UN in mediating conflict, undertaking preventative diplomacy and building peace. These included, most notably, the conceptualisation and design of peacekeeping<sup>6</sup>, the introduction of special representatives to the UN Secretary-General<sup>7</sup> and the notion of 'silent diplomacy'<sup>8</sup>. The 'Hammarskjöld approach' and its underlying principles are well documented in many of his numerous speeches and reports.

Despite an elaborate diplomacy vested in the office of the Secretary-General, not every conflict that called for responsible international management would – due to the prohibitive stance of the directly affected party – allow the UN to act accordingly. And not every intervention was successful. The track record during the Hammarskjöld era showed the limitations of both his office and the international body during the Cold War polarisation. Yet, the practices and experiences then still offer relevant lessons for today as regards the potential role of the world body's intervention in conflicts despite the change of times and constellations<sup>9</sup>.



Dag Hammarskjöld visiting the school of Givath-Jearim, a village for new immigrants in the Jerusalem hills, during his visit to Israel in 1956.

## The Hammarskjöld principles

Inclusivity, like ‘otherness’ – during Hammarskjöld’s era not a term in common parlance – were integral parts of what could be described as the Hammarskjöld principles. They were based on an understanding that it was only by embracing a variety of different interests and actors that a framework for lasting conflict resolution and peacebuilding could be achieved. For Hammarskjöld, the work of the UN should build on the commonality of humankind, its conduct and experience. He was of the conviction that the organisation represents more than the sum of its members. Many of his Introductions to the Annual Reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly – in as much as his speeches – were masterfully crafted reflections, which capture and re-think fundamental principles of international organisation. They address inter alia the distinction between ‘impartiality’ and ‘neutrality’ (1954), ‘mediation’ and ‘reconciliation’ (1955), ‘good offices’ (1959), the contours of the Charter as a ‘constitutional framework for world-wide cooperation’ (1960) and ‘international civil service’ (1961).

For Hammarskjöld, the UN was supposed to be the unique instrument for a peaceful solution of conflicts through negotiations guided not least by an all-embracing approach. The new member states, who after decolonisation joined the UN system in growing numbers from the 1950s onwards, were for him equal partners, to be treated with respect, and in full recognition of their sovereign rights (as well as obligations). He deliberately involved them in UN missions and relied on their support for peacekeeping initiatives. This implied a shift of emphasis, away from the focus on preserving the established international (dis)order of superpower rivalry between West and East, and towards a constructive way of dealing with the challenges represented by the changing international configuration. An important element of the negotiations was the modified agenda established through dialogue with the newly independent member states. This was based on Hammarskjöld’s inclusive strategy of seeking support from those not trying to acquire or retain control over world affairs on the basis of material strength.

During the Suez crisis in 1956, Hammarskjöld stated in no uncertain terms to the Security Council that in his view ‘the discretion and impartiality... imposed on the Secretary-General...[should] not degenerate into a policy of expediency’<sup>10</sup>. His even-handedness towards the big powers is demonstrated in an incident that Sture Linnér recalled in his Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture in 2007<sup>11</sup>. In July 1961, President J. F. Kennedy tried to intervene directly in the prevailing conflict in the Congo. Afraid that Antoine Gizenga, suspected of representing Soviet interests, would seize political power, and then campaign for election as prime minister, Kennedy demanded that the UN should oppose Gizenga’s candidacy. He threatened that if this did not meet with compliance from member states, the United States of America and other Western powers might withdraw their support from the UN<sup>12</sup>.

Reportedly, Hammarskjöld, in a phone conversation with Linnér, dismissed this unveiled threat with the following words: ‘I do not intend to give way to any pressure, be it from the East or the West; we shall sink or swim. Continue to follow the line you find to be in accordance with the UN Charter<sup>13</sup>.’

Dag Hammarskjöld held a firm belief in the autonomy of the office of the UN Secretary-General and the Secretariat, which he maintained ought not to be degraded to a mere instrument and conference machinery serving the interests of the powerful states. Hammarskjöld was repeatedly challenged by the Soviet Union to resign. In response, he delivered one of his most famous speeches. As he stressed, his office was supposed to serve not the most influential members of the organisation, but to be a loyal servant to the less influential states, many of which had no voice in the club of the powerful. As he stated:

It is not the Soviet Union or indeed any other Big Powers which need the United Nations for their protection. It is all the others. In this sense, the Organization is first of all their Organization and I deeply believe in the wisdom with which they will be able to use it and guide it. I shall remain in my post during the term of office as a servant of the Organization in the interest of all those other nations as long as they wish me to do so. [Here the speech was interrupted for several minutes by a standing ovation.]

In this context the representative of the Soviet Union spoke of courage. It is very easy to resign. It is not so easy to stay on. It is very easy to bow to the wish of a Big Power. It is another matter to resist. As is well known to all members of this Assembly I have done so before on many occasions and in many directions. If it is the wish of those nations who see in the Organization their best protection in the present world, I shall now do so again<sup>14</sup>.



Dag Hammarskjöld  
visiting a Palestinian  
refugee camp near Beirut.

The link between Hammarskjöld’s intellectual background and his approach towards international law might be instructive<sup>15</sup>. Hammarskjöld adopted a ‘flexible’ approach, which reconciled the recognition of global norms and principles with the application of ethical principles<sup>16</sup>. This is reflected in his contextual vision of norms and principles. Hammarskjöld was one of the early defenders of the link between peace, security and human rights. Being convinced of the universal nature and character of these human rights may at the same time have promoted further his commitment to inclusivity. He perceived fundamental concepts, such as collective security or non-intervention through the lens of human rights and human security, by means of a focus on ‘men’ in addition to states, and on ‘dignity’ in addition to security – a nexus that is recognised in UN peace maintenance

today. Hammarskjöld’s personal ethics explain his openness towards UN intervention and protection, when the UN crossed the boundaries between peacekeeping and peace enforcement in the Congo.

## The Hammarskjöld legacy

During his period in office, Hammarskjöld can be seen to have made three lasting contributions: ‘peacekeeping operations (a new UN instrument), his realisation of the importance of acting at an early stage in crises (preventive diplomacy) and his emphasis on the position of the UN as an international resource (an internationally independent Secretariat)’<sup>17</sup>. Hammarskjöld’s awareness of the dialectics and interrelationship between peace, security and human rights is apparent, as elsewhere, in his address to the American Jewish Committee in New York on 10 April 1957: ‘We know that the question of peace and the question of human rights are closely related. Without recognition of human rights we shall never have peace, and it is only within the framework of peace that human rights can be fully developed’<sup>18</sup>. Hammarskjöld’s ethics, his concept of solidarity, his sense of fundamental universal values and human rights in combination with his respect for the multitude of identities within the human family, as well as his global leadership as the world’s highest international civil servant, set standards that have lost none of their value and relevance<sup>19</sup>. These also included the insight that policy ultimately has its core in the inner nature of the individual actors involved.

His approach to mediation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding is anything but an anachronistic matter, belonging to the past. Several specific abilities deserve to be considered in today’s efforts to negotiate peace and find lasting solutions to conflicts. These include:

- his ability to acknowledge diverse interests as a point of departure for exploring settlements for a conflict (including so-called face-saving compromises);
- his willingness to listen and to understand first before offering his own ideas for a possible solution;
- his determination to honour the spirit and word of the UN Charter as the sole guiding principle for the values pursued;
- his steadfastness in resisting being used as a tool or instrument by any member state due to its influence or political orientation;
- his belief that every UN member state deserves respect and that the UN is as much there for the ‘weak’ as it is for the ‘strong’;
- his conviction that any internationally lasting agreement should be brokered by and through the authority of the UN Secretariat, which should always be in charge of and maintain the ultimate control over UN interventions, not least through the executive power vested in the Secretary-General.

The above list points to his firm belief in what we now call inclusivity: the importance of engaging with the variety of agencies and actors in their own right and on equal footing. In many ways he saw his own role as one of showing respect and recognition for the ‘weak’, who otherwise would not be included in negotiations and the search for solutions.



Dag Hammarskjöld in front of the United Nations Headquarters, New York.

These were certainly factors that contributed to his relative success in several cases of silent diplomacy as well as direct intervention in conflicts. But it was the credibility Hammarskjöld gained as Secretary-General, through living up to the ideals he articulated, which may have been the single most important aspect of his track record. The respect for and recognition of his integrity and the belief in his trustworthiness made him an accepted counterpart for dialogue in search of solutions among most of those who were opponents in conflicts. It seems appropriate to end with a longer entry in Hammarskjöld's personal, posthumously published notebook, *Markings*, written towards the end of 1955, which is a testimony to the moral compass he consistently followed. It still reads like a vade mecum for efforts to engage in peacebuilding today:

It is more important to be aware of the grounds for your own behaviour than to understand the motives of another.

The other's 'face' is more important than your own. If, while pleasing another's cause, you are at the same time seeking something for yourself, you cannot hope to succeed.

You can only hope to find a lasting solution to a conflict if you have learned to see the other objectively, but, at the same time, to experience his difficulties subjectively.

The man who 'likes people' disposes once and for all of the man who despises them.

All first-hand experience is valuable, and he who has given up looking for it will one day find that he lacks what he needs: a closed mind is a weakness, and he who approaches persons or painting or poetry without the useful ambition to learn a new language and so gain access to someone else's perspective of life, let him beware<sup>20</sup>.



**Henning Melber** is Senior Advisor to the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and previously served as its Executive Director (2006–2012). He has been the Research Director of the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala (2000–2006) and Director of the Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit in Windhoek (1992–2000). He is Extraordinary Professor at the Department of Political Sciences of the University of Pretoria and at the Centre for Africa Studies of the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, a Senior Advisor to the Nordic Africa Institute and a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies/School of Advanced Study at the University of London.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> 'China calls for necessary improvement of peacekeeping theory, practice', *People's Daily Online*, 27 August 2011.
- <sup>2</sup> 'FM: UN must prove its effectiveness', *Famagusta Gazette*, 21 October 2011.
- <sup>3</sup> Lily Rothman, 'Why Pope Francis Praised Dag Hammarskjöld', *Time*, 25 September 2015.
- <sup>4</sup> See, for an introduction, Hans Corell, Inge Lønning and Henning Melber, *The Ethics of Hammarskjöld*. Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation 2010; Ove Bring, Henning Melber and Peter Tejler, *Dag Hammarskjöld and Global Governance* (Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 2011); Monica Bouman, 'Dag Hammarskjöld and the politics of hope', in Carsten Stahn and Henning Melber (eds), *Peace Diplomacy, Global Justice and International Agency: Rethinking Human Security and Ethics in the Spirit of Dag Hammarskjöld* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 130.
- <sup>5</sup> Maybe the hitherto most instructive essay on the close linkage between Swedish social norms and values at the time and Hammarskjöld's translation of these into his work as an international civil servant is Helmut Klumpjan, 'Eine Synthese zwischen Nation und Welt: Dag Hammarskjöld – Der Weltbürger, der stets ein Schwede blieb', in *Dag Hammarskjöld (1905-1961): Für eine friedliche Welt – Ideen und Impulse des zweiten UN-Generalsekretärs*. ed. Manuel Fröhlich, Helmut Klumpjan and Henning Melber, (Frankfurt/Main: Brandes & Apsel, 2011). An intimate in-depth study of the spiritual and the secular Hammarskjöld is offered by Roger Lipsey in his *Hammarskjöld: A Life* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013).
- <sup>6</sup> The introduction of such planned intervention through a UN military contingency under the Secretary-General was as much the achievement of Lester B. Pearson, born during the Suez crisis, who became Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs and later Prime Minister, and who was a close confidant of Hammarskjöld. See Terence Robertson, *Crisis: The Inside Story of the Suez Conspiracy*. London: Hutchinson 1965.
- <sup>7</sup> See Manuel Fröhlich, 'The John Holmes Memorial Lecture: Representing the United Nations—Individual Actors, International Agency, and Leadership', *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2014, 169-193.
- <sup>8</sup> Cf. Peter Wallensteen, 'Dag Hammarskjöld's diplomacy: lessons learned', in Stahn and Melber, 'Peace Diplomacy'.
- <sup>9</sup> See, among the most authoritative analyses on the political legacy of Hammarskjöld, Manuel Fröhlich, *Dag Hammarskjöld und die Vereinten Nationen: Die politische Ethik des UNO-Generalsekretärs* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002); also published in a considerably shorter version as *Political Ethics and the United Nations: Dag Hammarskjöld as Secretary-General* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).
- <sup>10</sup> Security Council Official Records, Eleventh Year, 751st Meeting, 31 October 1956, in *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations. Volume III: Dag Hammarskjöld 1956-1957*, selected and edited with commentary by Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote (New York and London: Columbia University Press 1973), 309.
- <sup>11</sup> Linnér (1917-2010) was at the time of Hammarskjöld's death Under-Secretary-General in charge of the UN mission in the Congo. He presented the Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture in Uppsala on 15 October 2007.
- <sup>12</sup> For more details on this period and the unusually blunt intervention see the comprehensive documentation in Madeleine G. Kalb, *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa – From Eisenhower to Kennedy* (New York: MacMillan, 1982), 274-276. See also on this period and US policy, John Kent, *America, the UN and Decolonisation: Cold War conflict in the Congo* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2010).
- <sup>13</sup> Sture Linnér, 'Dag Hammarskjöld and the Congo crisis, 1960-61', in Sture Linnér and Sverker Åström, *UN Secretary-General Hammarskjöld. Reflections and personal experiences: The 2007 Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture* (Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 2008) 26.
- <sup>14</sup> Dag Hammarskjöld, 'I Shall Remain in My Post...' – Second Statement of Reply, New York, 3 October 1960, General Assembly Official Records, Fifteenth Session, 883rd plenary meeting, in *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations. Volume V: Dag Hammarskjöld 1960-1961*, selected and edited with commentary by Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1975), 200-201.
- <sup>15</sup> See, i.a., Ove Bring, 'Hammarskjöld's dynamic approach to the UN Charter and international law', in Stahn and Melber, *Peace Diplomacy, Global Justice and International Agency*.
- <sup>16</sup> See also Oscar Schachter, 'Dag Hammarskjöld and the Relation of Law to Politics', *American Journal of International Law*, vol. 56, no. 1, 1962, 1-8.
- <sup>17</sup> Peter Wallensteen, *Dag Hammarskjöld* (Stockholm: The Swedish Institute. 2004), 41ff.
- <sup>18</sup> Dag Hammarskjöld, 'Address on Human Rights and the Work for Peace at the Fiftieth Anniversary Dinner of the American Jewish Committee, New York, 10 April 1957', in *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations. Volume III*, 555.
- <sup>19</sup> See, as a recent affirmation, Hans Corell, 'Dag Hammarskjöld, the United Nations and the rule of law in today's world', in Stahn and Melber, *Peace Diplomacy, Global Justice and International Agency*.
- <sup>20</sup> Dag Hammarskjöld, *Markings* (New York: Random House/Ballantines, 1983), 96.

# Local ownership – an imperative for inclusive peacebuilding

Jerry McCann

## Introduction

Peacebuilding needs to come full circle back to its origins. In the early 1990s, when the developed world was becoming overwhelmed with a backlog of failed peace negotiations in the wake of the end of the Cold War, it was clear that without the consolidation of peace within a country, externally-driven, negotiated peace agreements could not deliver conflicted societies from the grip of violence and destruction. The concept of peacebuilding arose out of a recognition that from within a society, structures needed to be identified and supported that would strengthen and solidify peace, thus removing violent internal conflict as a consequence of social and/or political differences confronting a state. Unfortunately, what ensued was a flood of externally driven initiatives and institutions pledging to support internal peacebuilding processes without a clear sense of who to support, how to support them, or over what length of time the support should come. Confusion around and competition for peacebuilding initiatives has led to the adoption of ‘peacebuilding’ as a catch-all phrase suggesting one’s commitment to peace regardless of how one intervenes. If one of the fundamental tenets of peacebuilding is its need to come from within the society, external actors must reconsider how their support can be more effectively integrated into locally owned efforts towards building peace.



## Local ownership by whose design?

Proclamations of local ownership run rampant in just about every externally funded peacebuilding initiative. From the ownership of the marginalised at the grassroots level, to the ownership of the state at the national level, organisations claiming to have designs for building peace consider it routine to identify those that they target as owners of the initiative. The unfortunate reality of ‘peacebuilding’ as a professional practice is that provided the intervention suggests local ownership, and provided the target groups are of interest to the donors, one can sustain oneself as a peacebuilder without significantly affecting peace. Regrettably, the mere suggestion of local ownership by peacebuilding actors is sometimes enough to generate external funding support, even if actualising that ownership is not even remotely possible.

Many efforts to develop peacebuilding interventions fail to demonstrate the concepts they pursue. Phrases such as ‘locally-driven, locally-owned’, ‘building local capacities’, and ‘strengthening social cohesion’ abound in peacebuilding designs but are much less evident in practice. Because fragile societies seldom have institutional capacities that elicit strong levels of confidence from the donor world, most peacebuilding initiatives in failed or fragile states rely on external actors to bring legitimacy and integrity into the design and implementation of such initiatives. While donors typically insist on broad-based local ownership as a key component of project design, there is little effort made to understand or assess how much local ownership resides within the design itself. Local institutions, whose roles are key to actual peacebuilding impact, rarely embrace externally prepared project designs without reservations. Such designs may be tolerated and promoted by the stakeholders because of the financial opportunities promised or the external leverage exerted, but that does nothing to engender ownership. In cases where local institutions do have ownership in the development of the project intervention, it is far from a given that the institutions characterise the entirety of the local representation needed for the project to be a success (in terms of both the breadth and the depth of the inclusion). The reality is that for initiatives that count on broad-based local ownership to succeed, multi-layered, broad-based participation in designing the intervention is essential.

## Process versus project

At the heart of the local ownership dilemma are the competing factors of external demands fixated on projects versus the internal needs required to build peace. These internal needs are not easily exposed, nor are they readily accessible at the design stage of interventions, let alone during implementation. To understand the needs of the population, as the population understands them, one should consider the process necessary to gain that understanding. Only with that understanding, rather than through an externally analysed and developed set of specific project objectives, can locally-owned change initiatives emerge. There are several important reasons a process rather than project orientation is critical in peacebuilding interventions: (i) in order to truly understand both the capacities and limitations of target groups, sufficient

time and resources must be dedicated; (ii) ownership requires trust, trust requires relationship, and relationships need time and cooperation to develop; and (iii) flexibility is essential, so as to adjust the course of action through the unpredictable tangle of challenges that emerge as change begins to take place. How each of these issues is handled has consequences for the quality of the peacebuilding intervention and the sustained results it will generate. Thus, the international community should reconsider its approach to peacebuilding within these three areas, as highlighted below.

**Understanding context:** Too often it is assumed that as long as local actors are built into peacebuilding designs, fundamental understanding of the context, culture, logic and motivations of the target groups will follow and inform the intervention. This is an assumption that does not always hold true. Local actors who are accessible to external groups tend to be attractive due to their language and education levels, skills usually gained in conjunction with elite status in society or long absences from the country. These characteristics can distance the practitioners from the local contexts they claim to represent, limiting their access to – and rootedness in – the target groups, and reduce the likelihood of achieving local ownership. Another factor that can limit contextual understanding is the often small number of local actors shaping the understanding. Such limited perspectives foster perceptions of gatekeeping or provoke power imbalances that end up discouraging local ownership. For instance, rather than a few local researchers being tasked to provide a contextual basis for the design of a peacebuilding intervention, broad-based consultative processes reaching out beyond the familiar territory of researchers are needed. Through this kind of preparatory process a much deeper understanding of the context can be achieved, leading to much more relevant and effective peacebuilding programme designs. Without a process that engages the broadest base of stakeholders and thereby facilitates a collective understanding of the context, peacebuilding objectives can be difficult if not impossible to achieve.

**Trust-building:** Given the multiple layers of controls and accountability<sup>1</sup>, the very nature of today's peacebuilding projects adds to the trust deficit between external actors and internal practitioners. While it is unrealistic to suggest that these controls and accountability demands be eliminated or even relaxed, it is important to understand that the controls imposed on the external implementing agency by the donors is typically amplified when passed on to the local institutions, often resulting in a significant strain on relationships. In order to ensure that trust is not sacrificed at the expense of accountability, longer-term relationships that allow institutional understanding and compatibility between external and internal partners can be advantageous. This applies not only to those carrying out the work but also to those within the context that are targeted. Because of the competitive nature of donor funding, and hesitance on the part of the international community to sustain longer-term relationships with local practitioners for fear of being accused of favouritism, the odds are stacked against relationship-building processes that deepen trust. This is unfortunate

because it is only with trust that externally initiated projects can lead to broad-based, locally-owned impacts on peace. If donors are not ready to trust local institutions with their grants, and international grant recipients are not ready to trust their local partners with the overall management of the project (e.g. decision-making, including financial management decisions), the likelihood of significant local ownership is nil.

**Adaptability:** Effective peacebuilding leads to changes in society that ensure internal conflicts can be managed without violence. Because change is the goal (as the status quo in fragile and failed states represents greater potential for violence than peace) there is an implicit uncertainty from the outset of any intervention; it is impossible to predict the precise route a society will take on its way to becoming more peaceful. Rather than trying to make accurate predictions, what leads to greater levels of peacebuilding impact is the ability to respond to the unexpected signs that inevitably emerge from ongoing peacebuilding interventions. Projects require specific objectives with measurable outputs leading to predictable outcomes, while peacebuilding needs processes of deep understanding, coupled with the development of deeper levels of trust in order to create the greatest adaptability in contexts seeking change. Often the local actors will recognise and be able to act on changing dynamics to keep peacebuilding interventions relevant. If they are not given the ability to redirect or adjust activities to respond to those changes, both their ownership of the process, and the impact of the intervention will suffer.



## The peace horizon

The question of whom to support and how to support them is one of the most difficult challenges for peacebuilding practitioners. And while there are typically no arguments between policy-makers and practitioners on the need for broad-based, inclusive local ownership, the time horizon allowed to identify, engage and support strategies that lead to impact is too often impossibly limited. Herein lies the paradox: after centuries of historical evidence on the nature of peace and decades of focused attention on what is needed to build peace, the international community's demands for short-term impact ignores the much longer-term timelines needed. There are clear correlations between the time, resources and attention given to peacebuilding in conflict and post-conflict contexts and the levels of success they have achieved. Whether in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Liberia or Honduras, to name a few, many peacebuilding practitioners believe that the limited time and resources invested in efforts to build peace directly correlate to the low levels of peace in those countries decades after the efforts began. This is largely because, historically, few interventions supporting peacebuilding focused on decades-long time horizons but rather invested in a series of non-incremental shorter-term initiatives, each having limited success.



## The path to inclusive local ownership

Interpeace, a Swiss-based peacebuilding institution established over 20 years ago with experience in over 30 countries around the world, has focused on local ownership since its inception. As an international organisation committed to inclusive, locally-driven, locally-owned peacebuilding interventions, Interpeace strives to overcome the historically reinforced hierarchical nature of external support to meet internal needs by following a set of norms in its peacebuilding interventions that it has developed through years of experience. These norms, as summarised below, provide greater guarantees not only that local ownership can be attained, but also that the peacebuilding interventions demonstrate the concepts they pursue.

**Invitation to engage:** Where local institutions or key stakeholders have sought out international organisations to engage in their countries, they are more likely to support and nurture the presence of the outsiders. Establishing support through relationships with national stakeholders and local institutions who recognise the value of the external actor's work and the orientation of its approach establishes local ownership from the outset. Ensuring that local stakeholders can hold external actors accountable for actions inside their own country, and have confidence that the outsiders are there to support rather than to drive processes of change, is an essential entry point into local ownership dynamics.

**Local partnerships:** While the practice of collaborating with 'local partners' has become the norm for external actors, the vague use of the term 'partner' may indicate how easy it is to pay lip-service to locally owned processes through suggestions of local partnerships. External organisations tend to be uncomfortable with truly equitable partnerships with local institutions. This can lead to suggestions of partnership, while key programmatic, financial and administrative decision-making remains in the hands of the international 'partners'. While there are many tactical ways these decisions can responsibly be put into the hands of local actors and stakeholders without abandoning accountability, few international organisations with thin operating margins and a sense of vulnerability to the obligatory rules of accounting are comfortable with giving greater decision-making responsibility (i.e. ownership) to local partners. This risk aversion is often interpreted by local partners as lack of trust or confidence and can fuel a sense of inequity and significantly affect their sense of ownership, consequently reducing their level of commitment to the initiative.

**Inclusive process:** One of the noticeable weaknesses in external efforts to promote inclusive processes and ownership from within is the means by which that inclusion is established. Paradoxically, too often the criteria for inclusion are established through non-inclusive processes, by external actors applying their own cultural norms, and by internal actors who may be seeking ways to promote their own interests. This can be further weakened by the way those criteria are subjectively applied. If not properly designed and practised, selection processes can reinforce nepotism, tokenism, patronage and other forms of exclusivity. These negative forms of 'ownership' are precisely why ownership and inclusion must be considered hand in hand.



Superficially, weak inclusion processes may appear to be inclusive, but in fact can fall dangerously short. Because representation almost always comes with privilege, some processes can even start off as inclusive, only to become exclusive because of the disconnections and privileges that are created through the processes.

A case in point is the dilemma the international community finds itself in with the New Deal process<sup>2</sup>. The most prominent voices demanding local ownership, and those that ultimately became the ‘local’ owners of the New Deal process, were the governments of New Deal countries. This led to significant and consequential exclusion of civil society, the private sector and other key stakeholder groups. Today, there are very few cases of multi-layered, broad-based ownership of the Fragility Assessments that formed the basis of New Deal funding compacts between the international community and target countries.

Another example of exclusivity resulting from efforts to seek local ownership comes in the promotion of local institutions (NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, etc.) by the international community. In almost every fragile state, there are rarely more than a handful of local institutions with the capacity and the commitment to carry out complex, politically charged peacebuilding processes. If they begin to demonstrate peacebuilding impact through their inclusive interventions, they can become a magnet for externally funded initiatives, some only tangentially related to their core strengths. The dominant role that some of these local institutions can begin to play makes them as susceptible to exclusionary practices as the governments they are challenging to become more inclusive. Interpeace has been working through this challenge for over a decade with some of its longstanding local partners<sup>3</sup>. We have found that unless each intervention has very specifically developed and measurable mechanisms of inclusion, there is no guarantee that inclusion will automatically result. Equally important is that the inclusive nature of the local partner’s own make-up remain balanced over time.

**Locally developed, action-oriented solutions:** Peacebuilding represents changes to society that reinforce greater commitments and capacities to manage conflicts that arise in society peacefully. Ultimately, interventions need to go beyond analysis and dialogue and lead to actions that spark a population’s confidence that locally owned, inclusive processes can lead to changes between themselves and the state. These changes need to emerge from processes where solutions are driven by both those responsible for the changes and those affected by the changes. Solutions that are based on knowledge emerging from within society but then generated from analysis and designs centred outside of society (or within society by those considered outsiders) will rarely ensure the same level of local ownership as those solutions emerging from processes wholly within society. Equally, the level of inclusive ownership of the end result correlates to the extent of the inclusion throughout all parts of the process – the discovery, development and implementation of solutions – rather than during any one phase. Many peacebuilding processes tend to focus on ensuring solutions come from within, but do not extend that consideration into the development and implementation of those solutions.

In order to put the concept of locally-developed, action-oriented solutions into practice, Interpeace has had to look closely at the way it determines the nature of its interventions. Even if we work very closely with our local partners on peacebuilding interventions, we run the risk of considering the local partner the owner of the process, rather than ensuring it is the beneficiaries and not the implementers that take ownership. To offset this risk, Interpeace designs its interventions to allow for solutions to emerge in one phase of the process, so that they can be pursued in a subsequent phase of the same process. This requires the intervention to be open to the direction of the stakeholders in the process, rather than the analysts designing the intervention. In Mali, this led to the stakeholders prioritising strengthening the relationship between the security forces and the communities. While anyone who has studied the dynamics of Mali would not be surprised that this is an issue, few may have considered it to be a priority of both the people in the communities and the members of the security sector.

**Trust-enabled processes of collaboration:** The concept of trust is typically woven into the language of all actors participating in peacebuilding processes – and with good reason. Trust at some level is necessary for any group of people to collaborate, but it is especially needed when it has been eroded from society during times of violent conflict. Unfortunately, the proposed levels of trust are rarely achieved. While assessing trust objectively is neither easy nor viable, those participating in a process are usually keenly aware of the level of trust between themselves. Ultimately, levels of trust must be palpable at each interface of the peacebuilding value chain, from beneficiary to donor. One way to measure levels of trust is to measure levels of ownership transfer happening as a natural progression of growth and not because it is forced or required. The transfer of ownership or decision-making authority from donors to international partners, to local partners, to stakeholders and target beneficiaries is essential to peaceful change, and the trust ingredient has to exist between each of those links. Paying attention to where trust is evident and where it is limited is important in determining the extent of impact that is possible.

Interpeace recognises that in context where levels of distrust are high, interventions that include trust-building can be seen as naïve or disingenuous. At the same time, we believe that peacebuilding cannot occur without trust-building. Before there can be trust there must be dialogue, and once trust has been activated, even if it is a guarded, limited trust, there must be evidence of the trust to suggest it has begun. These two aspects (dialogue as a demonstration that trust is even possible, and evidenced changes demonstrating it has been established) are important components of Interpeace's interventions. While we are not always successful in getting opposing groups to trust one another, there is always evidence in our work of the intention to bridge the trust gaps. This starts by having a local team that is committed to overcoming that distrust<sup>5</sup> and ensuring that authentic intentions to pursue trust are central to our interventions.

Peacebuilding cannot occur without trust-building and dialogue.



## Considerations for the international community

The distance between policy and practice is always a difficult chasm to span. This is further complicated in peacebuilding, given the importance of allowing the process to define direction and solutions. As we in the international community continue to recognise our shortcomings in enabling and promoting authentic processes of change driven by inclusive local ownership, we need to address the numerous systemic impediments we put in the way. Based on the path to local ownership laid out above, the following are some considerations that the international community should take into account when seeking to enable inclusive, locally owned peacebuilding solutions.

**Welcomed international partners:** When engaging with international implementing agencies, consider those with an established presence in the context who are able to demonstrate that they are welcomed by a broad range of stakeholders. In cases where this is not possible, consider phasing the intervention to ensure there is an opportunity for partners to demonstrate they can establish and sustain necessary levels of acceptance and trust.



**Authentic, equitable partnerships between international and local institutions:**

In cases where the international community is relying on partnerships between international organisations and local institutions, the capacities of the local institutions to drive the programmatic, financial and administrative aspects of the process forward can be limited. It is important to note that even in these cases the international community can take important strides towards local ownership. Ensuring that incremental development of the local institutions is built into the interventions will not only strengthen local ownership but also provide foundations on which local institutions can become more capable of direct implementation. Over time, external grants (often insisting on local partnerships) can be replaced by direct support to local institutions. Ideally, local institutions can then seek external expertise to strengthen their capacity to deliver strong peacebuilding processes rather than being co-opted by international organisations.

**Realistic timelines with sustained support:** While practitioners need to develop better peacebuilding processes that provide important time-bound deliverables throughout, thus responding to donor demands of value for money, donors need to allow for much longer intervention timelines with sustained support. Strong, committed organisations, both international and local, will have much greater impact if they are allowed to pursue their processes over considerably longer periods of time than the typical one to two years currently being supported.

**Flexible programming:** Peacebuilding interventions should be able to adapt to the shifting dynamics of fragile contexts. Programming that clearly defines process, but allows for flexibility to both navigate around unforeseen challenges and to pursue emerging opportunities, will resonate much more with stakeholders committed to peace than programming that forces activities and outputs regardless of relevance. It is when stakeholders committed to peace sense that the interventions are not responsive to their needs that true local ownership risks being lost.

**Multi-layered, inclusive processes:** Inclusion must work in two directions to achieve the greatest levels of engagement and consequently the greatest ownership of the process. In the vertical direction, peacebuilding processes that do not respond to influences at levels above and below the target groups can end up having an impact that is limited to a single layer within society. This stratification means that those within that layer can be vulnerable to pressures from those situated above or below. In the horizontal direction, the breadth of engagement is significant in determining the level of ownership and inclusion. In both cases, the tendency to focus on those most accessible (predominantly urban dwellers and those nearest to the paved roads) limits the opportunities for changes at the societal level. Too often the limitations of time and resources or, worse, the lack of an earnest commitment to get out beyond the easily accessible, can result in processes with little ownership.



**Tolerance for incremental change:** External pressure to pursue change faster than internal aptitudes, understanding and/or appreciation for change is likely to seriously stymie the impacts sought. Focusing on what is wrong in society and analysing how it can be fixed, rather than capitalising on strengths within society, further exacerbates this problem. Orienting solutions in line with what the population is willing to do and capable of doing must then be coupled with a readiness to tolerate the slower, more incremental pace of change. Acceleration is possible but only if it is catalysed through attention focused on internal commitments to change.

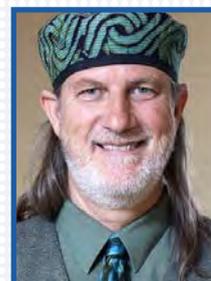
**More effective assessment of return on investment:** One of the deterrents to many of the considerations above is cost. While it is difficult to challenge concerns over the need for additional costs when available funding resources are shrinking, the greater concerns should be how little impact the peacebuilding field is having. Many of the measures that have been adopted to assess value for money reduce the financial analysis to how resources are used on activities that are prescribed to bring intended outcomes and impacts. The problem with this approach is that it relies on actual costs being measured against possible outcomes since the timelines are often too short for the full evidence of intervention outcomes and impacts to be seen. This can negatively distort the cost effectiveness of projects that put greater emphasis on local-ownership, as their impacts tend to take longer to become evident. Donors need to consider more effective ways to measure the value of achieving local ownership, something they typically insist upon but less often achieve. Likewise, donors need to reassess the limitations their funding models can put on sustaining local ownership. Ultimately, if donors want to reduce dependencies rather than perpetuate them, they must accept the fundamental role that local ownership plays in sustainable peace and ensure they are able to effectively invest in its pursuit.

What has baffled the international community since the concept of peacebuilding emerged over 20 years ago is how to systematically connect to and stimulate local ownership. Perhaps the most significant realisations will come when as external actors we accept that our greatest contribution to others' pursuit of peace is to enable and support authentic locally driven, locally owned processes rather than to simply give lip-service to them. This will require each of us to recognise the ways in which we act as a deterrent to local ownership, and to change our own practice accordingly.

- <sup>1</sup> As concerns over corruption and mismanagement of external funding grow within the donor community, there have been significant efforts to strengthen the controls and accountability measures required to access and utilise donor funds. Whether it is the demand for sophisticated accounting practices, the prescribed internal systems of checks and balances on each and every expenditure, or the compulsory complex procurement procedures, the requirements for funding are often beyond local institutional capacity. In many cases, this creates layers of complex controls/accountability: first from the donor to the international NGO, then from the international NGO to the partnering institution(s) at the national level, then down to the interventions at the local level.
- <sup>2</sup> The New Deal is a key agreement between fragile and conflict-affected states, development partners and civil society to improve the current development policy and practice in fragile and conflict-affected states. It was developed through the forum of the International Dialogue and signed by more than 40 countries and organisations at the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness on 30 November 2011 at Busan, Korea. ([www.pbsdialogue.org/en/new-deal/about-new-deal/](http://www.pbsdialogue.org/en/new-deal/about-new-deal/))
- <sup>3</sup> On a side note, a typical reaction Interpeace gets in some circles is a question over the healthiness of partnerships with local institutions over longer periods of time (many years/decades). While Interpeace recognises the risks, including dependency, complacency and fatigue, the question of trust and what the span of time can mean for the deepest forms of trust cannot be under-estimated. The idea that trust can simply span the length of a single intervention suggests that trust is not as important as it is touted to be. That said, if the risks mentioned above are not constantly monitored and kept from creeping in, they will overrun the long-term trust that is being sought.
- <sup>4</sup> This intervention is described in detail in the following Interpeace publication ([www.interpeace.org/resource/?type=publication&programmes=mali&language=english&theme=0#](http://www.interpeace.org/resource/?type=publication&programmes=mali&language=english&theme=0#)), and provides both a clear expression of the process, and the results (priorities for peace) that emerged.
- <sup>5</sup> All of Interpeace's local peacebuilding partners must demonstrate they believe in overcoming ethnic, religious and other tensions that led to and perpetuate the violent conflict in their countries, by ensuring each group is represented and has a voice in the implementation process.

## Notes

**Jerry McCann**, Deputy Director-General for Operations at Interpeace, has spent 20 years in Africa. Jerry's experience spans a career of engineering at home and abroad, which gave way in 2004 to a unique opportunity to work in the peacebuilding field. Jerry began his peacebuilding career working as the operations manager for Interpeace's Somali programme. In 2006, he established Interpeace's decentralised regional office, overseeing operations in Somalia, Rwanda and Burundi. In 2011, his role was expanded to manage Interpeace's operations around the world and support to its complex processes of peacebuilding in over 20 countries in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. He has been at the forefront of operationalising the peacebuilding work of Interpeace with a focus on locally driven, action-oriented and sustained processes of change.



## Inclusive peace processes – an introduction

Thania Paffenholz and Nicholas Ross

One of the principal reasons groups resort to violence and protest is to contest their exclusion from social, political or economic power. A wide range of research has found that more inclusive societies are generally more stable, harmonious and developed<sup>1</sup>. Research has also found that the inclusion of additional actors or groups next to the main conflict parties (such as civil society or political parties) in negotiation processes is crucial in making war-to-peace and political transitions more sustainable<sup>2</sup>. However, policy-makers and international donors continue to struggle to respond adequately to calls for greater inclusion.

Mediators and negotiators may resist inclusion for a variety of reasons. They may fear that including additional actors alongside the main negotiating parties will lead to a multiplication of positions at the table, making effective compromise more difficult. Included actors may band together (or ally themselves with negotiators) to form polarised coalitions, further inhibiting compromise. Pressures of ongoing violence, or limited funding, may mean that the negotiation timeframe cannot be extended to encompass the significantly increased numbers of positions, leading to reduced opportunity for dialogue and compromise. Inclusion may also not be compatible with the requirements of secrecy that are often the precondition for negotiators to come to the table. In addition, selecting a small sample of people to make decisions on behalf of an entire population presents huge challenges of representation, which can lead to accusations of corruption, bias or illegitimacy. The negotiating parties may view themselves as the legitimate representatives of part or all of the society affected by conflict.



Recent research has challenged these assumptions by demonstrating a correlation between the inclusion of additional actors other than the main conflict parties and greater durability of peace settlements<sup>3</sup>. However, it would be a mistake to equate numerical inclusion in negotiations with substantive socio-political inclusion in the resulting political settlement. The recently concluded ‘Broadening Participation’<sup>4</sup> project at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva<sup>5</sup> found that only if included actors had an influence on the process, was there a higher likelihood of agreements reached and sustainably implemented. In many cases the input of included actors is neutralised by already powerful elites. Even in cases where a more inclusive constitution or set of laws and institutions is negotiated, deeper practice of politics is often able to survive.

Nevertheless, mediators often prefer to focus on ending armed conflict through addressing the immediate grievances between the main belligerent parties. This is often manifested in exclusive negotiations, featuring only the leaderships of the belligerent parties. Procedural exclusion can lead to a number of deleterious effects. The structural inequalities that provoked the initial conflict may persist, leading to the emergence of other armed groups and the resumption of conflict. The focus on armed belligerent parties may create a perverse incentive for other aggrieved groups to take up arms, or to escalate the scale of their violence, in order to gain access to the negotiations and the distribution of power and resources in the peace settlement. In addition, war-to-peace transitions are frequently transformative moments in the history of states, leading to new forms of political organisation. Negotiations may therefore represent a unique opportunity to address issues of poor governance and corruption, structural violence and inequality, including gender-based violence and inequality, and to achieve sustainable reconciliation for past wrongs – all of which affect populations far beyond the belligerent parties.

Mediators and negotiators often try to address these issues by including additional actors in a peace negotiation process alongside the main negotiating parties. Inclusive negotiations, when they are practised, are motivated by a number of normative and pragmatic considerations. Important among the pragmatic reasons, are to increase legitimacy and public support generally, or to gain the buy-in of a particular constituency. Interestingly, the main parties to the conflict are more commonly among those pushing for inclusive negotiations than are mediators, and this is usually for the very pragmatic reasons. On the normative side, actors may be included out of a commitment to democratic values of participation, or else a commitment to the right to participate of a particular group, for example the commitment of all UN agencies to the inclusion of women entailed by UNSC Resolution 1325. It is important to note that, unlike other actors, women are almost never included for pragmatic reasons, but only through the advocacy and support of women’s organisations within the country (as can be seen in the recent peace process in Colombia), or due to pressure from the international community (as in the Yemeni National Dialogue Conference).

Given the opportunities and challenges presented by inclusion in peace processes, it is best approached not as a yes or no binary, but as a question of how to accommodate the increased complexity through effective process design. This involves questions of who should be involved in a process, when is the right moment to include additional actors, and how they should be included (or what form their participation should take).

The above mentioned recently concluded ‘Broadening Participation’ project investigated the relationship between the inclusion of more actors alongside the main negotiating parties and the impact that had on the quality and sustainability of peace and transition agreements, and their implementation. This study analysed 40 in-depth case studies using a comparative approach, applying both qualitative and quantitative methodologies of data analysis. One of the project’s major findings is that the benefits of inclusion only apply if included actors are able to influence the process<sup>4</sup>. Hence, procedural inclusion, if it is to be effective, must be designed to allow included actors to wield influence. The study also found that more positive influence from included actors in the negotiation phase of an agreement was correlated with a greater number of agreements being reached and implemented, and that these results were statistically significant. Importantly, the project also identified a set of process and context factors that enable or constrain successful inclusion, such as decision-making processes, selection criteria and procedures, elite resistance or the support of powerful regional actors.

## **Inclusive political negotiations – Who should be included?**

Inclusion is frequently conceptualised as the involvement of women and civil society actors. Both women and civil society are often imagined as the ‘good society’ that is reliably pro-peace and pro-democracy and, therefore, an essential supporting component within peace processes. This is not always true. Women and civil society groups are a mirror of society, manifesting peace-supporting, nationalist or belligerent perspectives. However, women make up approximately 50 per cent of the world’s population, and thus a rights-based preference for their inclusion is justified. The same does not hold automatically for civil society as their inclusion is context-specific and depends on the constitution of civil society, the phase of the peace process and the preparedness of involved groups.

In order to achieve sustainable outcomes, inclusion in peace processes must encompass all relevant actors that matter for reaching, and implementing, agreements in a sustainable manner, including potential spoilers. These actors can be civil society and women but also armed groups (apart from the Track 1 parties), political parties, business, minority groups, traditional and religious actors, eminent persons, communities or the public at large.



An inclusive process cannot be evaluated without knowledge about who was excluded from participation. For example, the National Assembly in Guatemala has long been presented as one of the most representative inclusion bodies. It consisted of political parties and civil society groups, including many women and indigenous groups. However, one of the most influential civil society organisations in the country, the landowners' association, was not present. Together with the political establishment the landowners were able to lobby against the implementation of many proposed changes that the National Assembly successfully brought into the peace agreement. Moreover, in reaching a sustainable agreement it is not simply enough that all relevant groups be included. The actors within these groups also need to be perceived as representative and legitimate. For example, in the Burundi peace negotiations, the Hutu negotiators rejected the participation of women's groups at the table because many of them were perceived as representing only the Tutsi community.

Inclusive processes are not sufficient if they do not lead to inclusive outcomes to make political settlements sustainable. These dimensions of inclusion can sometimes collide, as in cases where included actors are deliberately prevented from influencing the negotiation outcomes through process design. For example, in the 2011 Egyptian National Dialogue the leaders of the working groups were responsible for finalising the results of each group and passing them on to the Chair of the Dialogue, Abdel-Aziz Hegazy. These heads of working groups had been chosen, on the basis of unknown criteria, by Hegazy, a former prime minister of Egypt who did not enjoy much trust among the included actors.

## How, when and where should additional actors be included?

There is a lack of practical knowledge about inclusion in the UN and international community. Processes are designed and actors included mostly on the basis of untested hypotheses or normative biases. For example, there remains an excessive focus on the negotiation table as the locus of a peace process. However, inclusion can take place in all phases of the peace process and through a variety of different modalities. Paffenholz has developed a framework of modalities to describe the various options for the inclusion of additional actors alongside the main conflict parties, described in a subsequent chapter on civil society inclusion in this volume. The framework describes how, when and where additional actors can be included in a negotiation process – in the pre-negotiation, negotiation or implementation phases of a process – and can take place at greater or lesser degree of remove from the negotiation table.

For example, consultations prior to a negotiation process can help to shape the negotiation agenda to reflect the concerns of ordinary people. In the constitution drafting process in Fiji in 2012, an inclusive commission of constitutional experts tasked with producing a draft constitution (the Constitution Review Commission) held 550 consultations in a wide variety of urban and rural areas of Fiji prior to the drafting process. The participatory nature of the hearings was meant to give citizens a voice in the drafting of the constitution, giving the commissioners an idea of the discussions taking place within and across communities, in order to allow them to better incorporate citizens' views in the draft constitution.

Moreover, inclusion is far more likely to be successful when provided for in the official structure of the negotiation or implementation (normally in agreement texts). This is even more effective where the amount of participation is specified, as in the case of quotas. Hence, pre-agreement participation that leads to a more legitimate claim from included actors to remain involved throughout the process will generally lead to a higher degree of overall influence throughout the process.

Another important consideration is the location of the various elements of the process. Even though processes that take place far away from the violent conflict can help to create trust between the conflicting parties, actors generally find it more difficult to access processes taking place remotely (due to issues of cost, or else the hazards in, or restrictions on, travel).

## How can inclusion be made more effective?

In addition to the considerations of how, when and where inclusion should take place, there are additional factors that can influence whether included actors are able to have their voices heard in a process. These can be divided into process and context factors.

## Process factors

**Decision-making procedures** refer to the formal structure through which decisions are taken and a final outcome is reached. Decision-making procedures are essential as they can negate the benefits of inclusion by sidelining included actors or marginalising their contributions (non-binding inputs). For example, in almost all National Dialogues, despite widespread consultation with all groups, ultimate decision-making power rests with a small group of already powerful actors.

**Procedures and criteria of selection** determine whether included actors will effectively represent their constituencies. Selection procedures refer to how representatives are chosen from within their constituency, whereas selection criteria refer to how demographics, organisations or constituencies are identified for inclusion. The following selection procedures were identified: invitation, nomination, election, the advertisement of positions, and open participation. Selection criteria often specified demographic features, most commonly ethnicity, gender and geographical location. Included actors were also chosen because they were expected to support the positions of one or the other belligerent party, or due to their high levels of expertise, education or esteem.

**Transfer** refers to the transfer of information from other inclusion modalities to the negotiation table. Transfer strategies are essential in ensuring that the inputs of included actors make their way into agreements. This is particularly relevant for inclusion modalities further from the negotiation table such as consultations, high-level workshops, or commissions. Transfer strategies include: handing over of reports to negotiators or mediators; direct exchange with mediators, advisors, or negotiators; participation of mediators in consultations or problem-solving workshops; public statements; press releases; visible peace messages; and lobbying for the international or regional community's attention.





**Support structures for included actors** during negotiations can substantially enhance their influence on the negotiations. For example, when included actors had access to expert support during negotiations, such as assistance in drafting contributions to agreements, they were more effective in making differentiated and quality contributions.

**Coalition-building and joint positioning:** Where included actors were able to find sufficient common ground, the pooling of influence behind a single position or agenda was found to be a highly successful strategy. Conversely, where included actors seemed to have a high degree of influence in the structure of the negotiations, division within the included constituency undermined this influence.

**Inclusion-friendly mediators:** Mediator (and facilitator) support is an essential component of an inclusive process. Mediators can lobby for inclusion, set time aside for included actors, and make sure these are apprised of the progress of negotiations; they can also gather input from included actors and pass this on to the negotiation table.

## Context factors

**Elite support or resistance:** National elites are an important political constituency, with a stake in the established constellation of power in a society. Elites may oppose either specific provisions or else the participation of a particular group (e.g. women). Where elites oppose a particular political agenda, they are often content to bide their time during the negotiations and focus on undermining the related provisions at the implementation stage. Elite resistance constitutes a major headwind for included actors.

**Influence of regional actors:** The political influence of regional actors is decisive for peace and transition processes and has often been more important than that of international actors. This is especially true when regional actors feel their core national interests are at stake.

**Public support:** Public support is one of the key elements of any successful peace agreement. The national public may oppose an agreement because they do not view it as a good agreement, or because they are not informed about, or not engaged by, the negotiation process, or else out of a general antipathy to peace. Public support is also somewhat endogenous to the process, in that inclusive negotiations can generate support for the process, as well as for implementation. Even when the main armed parties to conflicts are able to conclude agreements without public support, ratification and implementation seldom works.

**Preparedness of included actors:** Preparedness refers to the organisational readiness to meet the formal requirements of participation in a negotiation process. Preparedness can be generated by included actors' prior experience with organisation, a tradition of organisation in a specific context, or else by targeted training and support strategies.

## Conclusion

Exclusion is not only normatively undesirable; it has a variety of deleterious effects on a society through the promotion of social conflict, underdevelopment, insecurity and even civil war. A strong research consensus from a variety of academic disciplines confirms these various effects, even if some disagreement persists about the relative magnitude or importance of each.

The shift from exclusive to more inclusive political orders, in the context of transitions out of fragility, remains relatively under-studied and poorly understood. This chapter has argued that inclusive political negotiations represent a key important moment in a peace process for securing inclusive practices and outcomes in the subsequent political order. Broader inclusion in itself is not sufficient to achieve positive outcomes. Rather, it is only quality inclusion – that is, the influence and ability of included actors to make meaningful contributions – that is strongly correlated with more durable and inclusive peace and political settlements. This finding highlights the need to change the way advocacy for inclusion is currently being practised. In particular, critical attention needs to be focused on the quality of participation, not just on the number of additional included actors. Furthermore, the results show that it is not only women and civil society who are potential candidates for inclusion, but also sidelined armed groups, political parties and hardliners, among others.

The supporting and hindering factors identified by the ‘Broadening Participation’ project can translate directly into policy and operational action in support of ongoing peace and transition processes during all phases (pre-negotiations, negotiations and implementation). They can serve as a planning or assessment frame to analyse whether a process has:

- the right design in terms of negotiation and implementation architecture and the correct inclusion modalities to create preconditions for impact;
- the relevant actors involved that can affect change;
- adequate procedures (decision-making, selection and transfer) and support structures in place for all included actors;
- a mediation team that has the adequate set-up and expertise to support the process;
- public support, or the means to generate it;
- strategies to deal with the most important national, regional and international actors;
- strategies to combine political and operational support to civil society, women and other potential or existing included actors.

# Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Frances Stewart, 'Horizontal Inequalities as a cause of conflict: a review of CRISE findings: CRISE Research Overview, 1 (Oxford: Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, Oxford University, 2010); Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, 'On economic causes of civil war', (Oxford Economic Papers 50, 1998), 563-573; Alina Rocha Menocal 'Inclusive Political Settlements: evidence, gaps, and challenges of institutional transformation', (Birmingham, UK: Internatioanl Development Department, University of Birmingham, 2015); Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, *Why nations fail: the origins of power, prosperity and poverty*, (New York Crown Publishers, 2012).
- <sup>2</sup> Desirée Nilsson, 'Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace,' *International Interactions: Empirical and Theoretical Research in International Relations* 38, no. 2 (2012); Thania Paffenholz, "'Broadening Participation Project" Briefing Paper', (Geneva: The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies: Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding, 2015).
- <sup>3</sup> Nilsson, 'Anchoring the Peace'.
- <sup>4</sup> The project's full title is: 'Broadening Participation in Political Negotiations and Implementation'. For the rest of the report it will be referred to as the 'Broadening Participation' project or research. The project has been funded by the governments of Norway, Switzerland, Germany, Finland and Turkey. For a summary of the project's overall research findings for all actors see: [www.graduateinstitute.ch/files/live/sites/heid/files/sites/ccdp/shared/Docs/Publications/briefingpaperbroader%20participation.pdf](http://www.graduateinstitute.ch/files/live/sites/heid/files/sites/ccdp/shared/Docs/Publications/briefingpaperbroader%20participation.pdf)
- <sup>5</sup> Paffenholz, "'Broadening Participation Project" Briefing Paper'.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.

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# 2

## Country case studies

With the aim of furthering the discussions on how to practise inclusivity in specific contexts and to facilitate the input of local perspectives in policy debates on peacebuilding, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation carried out country case studies in Somalia, Timor-Leste, Liberia and Burma/Myanmar. After initial desk studies, the Foundation teamed up with local organisations in the aforementioned countries and commissioned them to collect and analyse local views on peacebuilding and inclusivity. This section presents the main findings of studies conducted by the local partner organisations in 2013 and 2014.

The local research and consultations were not methodologically synchronised following the standards of an academic research initiative that would allow for direct comparisons. This was a deliberate decision, so as to give local partners greater leeway in determining the most appropriate approach for collecting and presenting local views on peacebuilding in their unique contexts. Through various forms of consultation, the local organisations gathered experiences from a variety of stakeholders, including government representatives, field staff of the UN and international NGOs, local civil society, women, youth and religious groups. A particular emphasis was placed on the perspectives of local actors and the community level, which is reflected in the findings.

The selected countries have vastly different historical contexts, are in different phases of conflict, and have varied experiences of internationally supported peacebuilding. These differences, coupled with practical considerations relating to the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation's existing networks, were factored into the selection process. Despite the diverse contexts, certain barriers to and opportunities for inclusivity were raised in several of the local consultations. These recurring themes have previously been synthesised and presented in Development Dialogue Papers no. 6, 'Inclusivity in Peacebuilding' (2014), and no. 13, 'Local Perspectives on Inclusive Peacebuilding: A four-country study' (2015).

## Country case study: Liberia

### Brief history and context

A Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2003 ended a period of devastating violence that Liberia suffered during two civil wars, which lasted for almost 15 years, killed approximately 300,000 people, displaced over 1 million Liberians and damaged 85 per cent of the nation's private and public infrastructure. Since then, this small West African country of 4 million people has been in a fragile phase of post-conflict reconstruction. Liberian peace has survived two general and presidential elections; in 2005 Harvard-educated economist and politician, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, became the first female president in Africa; she was re-elected in 2011.

THRP inclusivity  
workshop in Monrovia.



There has been a United Nations presence in Liberia since 2003, in the form of a peacekeeping mission (UN Mission in Liberia), as well as a UN Country Team. Liberia was placed on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) at the request of both the Liberian government and the Security Council in 2010. The government, with support from the PBC, has established three areas of mutual commitment that are considered peacebuilding priorities – rule of law, security sector reform and national reconciliation – and currently receives funding from the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) for various projects within these areas.

Liberia is a member of the group of fragile and conflict-affected states known as the g7+, formed in 2010 with the intention to share experiences and to promote the voices of fragile states in international policy discussions. They have signed on to and are a pilot country for the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (the “New Deal”) and its five identified Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (PSGs) as agreed at the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding forum for political dialogue. As part of this process they have completed one of the first steps of a fragility self-assessment and have launched a New Deal Dashboard in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The Dashboard is an online tool that will be used to track peacebuilding activities across Liberia that have been funded by international donors<sup>1</sup>.

## Partner organisation and study methodology

The Inclusive peacebuilding study in Liberia was undertaken by the Lutheran Church Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Program (THRP)<sup>2</sup>. THRP seeks to contribute to peacebuilding processes in Liberia by strengthening communities and civic structures and by conducting activities on healing, peacebuilding and reconciliation.



The study was conducted in June–September 2014. The process included 20 key informant interviews, 20 focus group discussions, two national-level stakeholder workshops and several informal consultations across the regions in Bomi, Bong, Bassa and Montserrado counties. Participants interviewed include civil society organisations, groups and networks for differently abled persons, youth, women, farmers, NGOs, UN, government institutions, traditional, religious and diverse citizens groups and individuals.

## **Main inclusivity issues raised in the study**

Inclusive peacebuilding is a concept that is weakly applied in practice in Liberia. Community ownership is often weak and local peacebuilding initiatives are still mostly implemented directly by ‘outsider’ civil society organisations. Capacity and funding constraints work to the disadvantage of local communities, and the traditional community structures that could be capitalised on often remain unused.

### *Lack of local ownership*

Local people generally want to be involved in peacebuilding processes. Asked about their conceptual understanding of peacebuilding, a majority of respondents were of the view that peacebuilding should be a collective effort by state and non-state actors, including the business sector and international partners, and that local people from various positions in the community need to be included. Local ownership is considered an essential part of national ownership, in the sense that community members should take responsibility for carrying out peacebuilding initiatives on behalf of their communities, with the support of outsiders.

However, such local ownership appears to be vastly lacking. In the experience of many local stakeholders, projects – even at the community level – are planned and implemented without substantive local involvement and are thus perceived locally as outsider initiatives. This diminishes the motivation and sense of responsibility at the local level and impedes local peacebuilding initiatives. Community perspectives seem to be lacking in the decision-making around peacebuilding initiatives, partly because there is no national platform or coordination mechanism that links national civil society structures to local ones that more accurately reflect opinions on the ground.

### *Capacity and funding constraints at the community level*

The lack of local involvement and ownership in peacebuilding efforts is also linked to capacity constraints and limited funding at the local level. International and national NGOs tend to have greater access to trained staff and consultants for peacebuilding implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, the top-down approach of such NGOs fails to allow for capacity transfer to the communities and contributes to the capacity gaps between community members and NGO workers. There are no clearly defined structures and mechanisms in place in most communities that ensure recruitment and capacity building of local stakeholders. Community members emphasise the importance of mobilising and facilitating for local actors to become more active, building organisational development skills and training in monitoring and evaluation.

The capacity shortage can be linked to the lack of funding of community-based initiatives. Many local groups depend on funding from international donors and the government. However, the current trend of international donor funding being distributed through governmental and national NGO systems makes it hard for local groups to access funds. Local organisations' capacity constraints, including lack of networks and technical competence, contribute to their problems in accessing donor funding. Community-based organisations are familiar with the experience of being blocked from accessing such funding by the presence of middle-layer NGOs, who in turn do little to transfer knowledge to local organisations. Competition for funds to implement peacebuilding programmes is still high amongst peacebuilding groups in the country, which hampers collaboration. This suggests that focus should be placed on strengthening cooperation and collaboration between the government, NGOs and local community actors.

### *Traditional community structures for peacebuilding*

There are also concerns among local stakeholders regarding broken and dormant community structures, which helped community conflict resolution, mediation and development prior to the civil wars in Liberia. For example, the 'palava hut' has traditionally been used to mediate conflicts and to engage in dialogue on issues related to peacebuilding and community development. Another useful traditional structure is the 'koo' system, which encourages community members to come together in groups to work cooperatively to improve their individual and collective undertakings. This system is also used for mediating conflicts and to foster reconciliation in the community.

Presentation during THRP  
inclusivity workshop.





These relevant community structures are currently dormant and efforts to reactivate them are minimal or non-existent in most communities studied. Such structures have potential to play an important role in mediating inter/intra communal/ethnic conflicts and in creating space for constructive dialogue and reconciliation at the community level. In addition, they should be recognised and used for the purpose of emphasising the positive aspects of existing cultural and traditional values and practices, on key areas such as human rights and peaceful coexistence.

March against sexual and gender-based violence in Tubmanburg, Bomi County.

### *Reconciliation is prioritised only on paper*

The slow progress of the reconciliation programme designed by Liberian government is another common concern. The need for reconciliation between perpetrators and victims in Liberia’s civil war is still a major issue in the peace process. The Liberian government has emphasised reconciliation as a key pillar for the transformation of Liberian society, but efforts to foster national reconciliation amongst citizens are still minimal. The country’s main instrument for promoting national reconciliation and transformation, the National Reconciliation Roadmap (NRM), continues to suffer setbacks due to lack of political will and exclusion of civil society. For example, key aspects of the implementation of the NRM, including restoration of traditional peacemaking structures such as the ‘palava hut’, have not been put into effect.

The government of Liberia wants to lead the process, whereas civil society members interviewed consider the implementation of the NRM to be above all the responsibility of civil society. Many members of civil society feel they are better positioned to serve as lead players in the implementation of the NRM, since ordinary Liberians lack confidence in the government's handling of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which remain unaddressed five years after the report was published<sup>3</sup>. Civil society actors could serve as mediators between the government and other stakeholders in the reconciliation process, as well as galvanise diverse voices. This suggests that the government of Liberia and civil society actors should come together and work out a common agenda for the implementation of this important pillar in Liberia's transformation agenda.

### *Personal security concerns*

The efforts to restore the security sector in post-war Liberia still face considerable challenges. According to this study, citizens are acutely worried about their security as the United Nations peacekeeping operation scales down its presence in Liberia. The limited numbers of security personnel assigned in the communities in the midst of numerous crimes and abuses is a cause of great concern. This contributes to fear and anxiety among citizens. The uncertainties related to personal security in communities contribute to lack of initiatives and leave citizens hopeless about the peace process. Strengthening local structures to complement the limited security personnel in these communities could help build a sense of security among residents.

THRP psychosocial session with kids during the Ebola crisis in 2014.



## Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following to the government of Liberia, international partners and NGOs involved in peacebuilding efforts:

### Ensure involvement of local stakeholders and community

**ownership:** Donors supporting local peacebuilding initiatives should set funding criteria, that implementing partners make clear commitments to and show evidence of community participation in the identification and planning of local peacebuilding initiatives. The government of Liberia and international partners should participate critically and monitor NGOs implementing local peacebuilding initiatives, to ensure they are significantly involved in mobilising communities to take ownership of local peacebuilding.

**Transfer of capacities to local people:** To enable local ownership and community participation, NGOs should include the transfer of skills and capacities to local people through training and other capacity-building initiatives. The Liberian government along with international partners should ensure that peacebuilding efforts in local communities are accompanied by the setting up of appropriate and community-friendly capacity-building structures responsive to expressed needs. Local groups should also be trained in how to fundraise to implement their own local peacebuilding initiatives.

### Traditional community structures for peacebuilding and reconciliation:

International actors supporting local peacebuilding initiatives should undertake an assessment of traditional community structures, such as the ‘palava hut’ and the ‘koo’ systems, which are still relevant to peacebuilding, conflict mediation and reconciliation, and ensure that these are recognised and strengthened to complement ongoing peacebuilding efforts at the community level. NGOs and community-based organisations should consider channelling their peacebuilding efforts through such structures to ensure that local communities take control of their peacebuilding processes. There should also be strong collaboration between local peacebuilding structures and organisations implementing other peacebuilding initiatives at the local level.

**Personal security concerns:** The government of Liberia and its international partners must continue to strengthen and professionalise the security sector, especially the Liberia National Police so that they can effectively address the main security threats at the community level. This may include increasing accountability and transparency in all components of the security sector and the implementation of existing operation guidelines, as well as increasing the number of security personnel assigned in remote, fragile or border areas.

<sup>1</sup> For more information about the New Deal and the International Dialogue, see [www.pbsbdialogue.org/en/](http://www.pbsbdialogue.org/en/)  
<sup>2</sup> [www.lcl-thrp.com](http://www.lcl-thrp.com)

<sup>3</sup> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (TRC) was enacted in May 2005 by the National Transitional Legislative Assembly and concluded in 2010 through a final report. The report implicated several government officials in war crimes. It is available at [www.trcofliberia.org/reports/final-report](http://www.trcofliberia.org/reports/final-report)

## Country case study: Timor-Leste

### Brief history and context

Timor-Leste is faced with considerable challenges as it seeks to transition from post-conflict reconstruction to stable peace as a springboard for the consolidation of liberal democracy. Its successive political crises and cycles of violence in the post-independence period (2002–2012) have highlighted deep divisions and unresolved issues dating back to the period before and during the struggle for independence that pose persisting challenges to lasting peace. These include widespread poverty and high youth unemployment; deep mistrust between citizens, their authorities and elected representatives; divisions among the political leadership; competition over ownership of historical narratives and symbols; fragility of judicial institutions to address corruption, collusion and nepotism; alienated and disaffected youth; land disputes; and domestic violence.



Market in Dili.

Since 1999, various peacebuilding efforts have been implemented in Timor-Leste, with engagement by the international community. The United Nations missions to Timor-Leste have included the political mission, United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) (June–October 1999); two peacekeeping operations, the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) (October 1999 – May 2002), and the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISSET) (May 2002 – May 2005); the political mission, United Nations Office in Timor-Leste (UNOTIL) (May 2005 – August 2006); and finally the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) (August 2006 – 31 December 2012) with a far-reaching mandate to assist the country in overcoming the consequences and underlying causes of the April–June 2006 crisis.

Today Timor-Leste is a member of the g7+, an intergovernmental organisation of countries affected by conflict, and has endorsed the New Deal with its five peacebuilding and statebuilding goals at the forefront of all international efforts in fragile states. The current government sees peacebuilding and statebuilding as a combined process and activities falling under these headings have been pursued since the country gained independence in 2002. However, the 2010 report from the forum for political dialogue known as the International Dialogue also states that:

The government and development partners are now recognising that resources originally required to build the foundations of the new state might have been overly concentrated in the capital. As regional divisions were sighted as a trigger of previous conflicts, there is now agreement that development spending outside Dili will need to be accelerated to avoid future risks of such conflicts<sup>1</sup>.

## Partner organisation and study methodology

The Inclusive peacebuilding study in Timor-Leste was undertaken by The Centre of Studies for Peace and Development (CEPAD)<sup>2</sup>. CEPAD is a Timorese NGO whose mission is to use collaborative research and dialogue to advance the understanding of conflict-related issues and the major challenges to the consolidation of sustainable peace and representative democracy in Timor-Leste.



For this study, 17 key informant interviews and three interactive dialogues were carried out in March 2014 in the districts of Baucau (east), Aileu (central) and Ermera (west) with a total of 49 participants. Participants were selected according to inclusive and representative criteria and included political and spiritual leaders, Church representatives, students and young people, political parties, local women's groups and martial arts groups.

## Main inclusivity issues raised in the study

### *Key processes have been largely top down*

In Timor-Leste's post-independence period, peacebuilding and statebuilding priorities have been largely determined at the level of the national capital, Dili, on the basis of what is required to improve the socio-economic conditions of the people, regardless of whether those priorities reflect district and regional needs. Such a process has influenced the community's understanding of 'inclusivity', which has come to be seen as participation by important individuals with the relevant socio-political status, depending on the nature of the programme in question. Where there is a need to engage communities at the local level, this tends to be done in the context of 'socialising' programmes already defined at the top, rather than by actually 'consulting' communities on the design and formulation of programmes.

With regard to the New Deal processes currently being applied in Timor-Leste, although it may be too early to determine the extent to which genuine inclusivity is being applied, there is a risk that the catch cry, 'Nothing about us without us'<sup>3</sup>, may in fact leave out the majority of the population, especially vulnerable groups such as women, youth, people in rural areas, people with disabilities and minority groups.



A farmer in the mountain village Maubisse, south of Dili.

### *Key segments of the population have been excluded*

Youth have been socially and economically marginalised in Timor-Leste rather than being given their due role in contributing to peacebuilding and development of the country. Youth are more likely to become involved in conflict and violent activity where there is high unemployment and lack of skills training or vocational education opportunities. For this reason, many of the activities that participants consulted during the study closely associated with peacebuilding were activities aimed at youth.

While culture and tradition can and do provide tools for peacebuilding, they can also present an obstacle to inclusive peacebuilding. Lack of women's participation, due to Timor-Leste's strongly patriarchal culture, means that targeted efforts are required to maximise the inclusion of women in dialogue processes.

Lack of rural participation in peacebuilding effort is seen as a challenge, with key stakeholders involved often coming exclusively from urban areas (for example, district capitals rather than more isolated sub-districts). Some reasons identified for this include poor infrastructure in rural areas, especially roads, lack of financial resources and transportation, and limitations in human resources.

### *Weaknesses in institutions and leadership*

Corruption, collusion and nepotism are considered critical barriers to inclusion in peacebuilding efforts as they lead to distrust between citizens, authorities and elected representatives. The formation of political society in the post-independence period has been characterised by an increasingly institutionalised system of patron-client networks favouring a small and well-connected political elite, taking advantage of opportunities through cronyism and nepotism, which reinforces both perceived and real inequality within society. Misuse of power, misuse of government assets, and discrimination during recruitment based on affiliation and relationships were seen as common practice.

Bureaucracy may also play a role in obstructing local-level initiatives, due to time lags and inconsistent processes, particularly in relation to government funding for grassroots initiatives. Participants in Baucau described how the long process of applying for funds for local-level initiatives discourages community members from implementing activities.

A culture of dependency has developed, partly because the government has often provided payments to individuals in the form of compensation to victims, veterans and even instigators of conflict (as in the case of the 2006 crisis). Moreover, citizens have come to expect payment for participating in peacebuilding activities (a practice that is said to have started during the UN transitional administration), which may be a barrier to grassroots organisations seeking to engage a broad base of citizens in consultations.

### *Negative consequences of international engagement*

A multiplicity of uncoordinated peacebuilding efforts has resulted in duplication of initiatives where key stakeholders, for example the village chief or other community leaders, are stretched between several activities at any one time. Often these activities overlap. The lack of synchronisation in peacebuilding activities is attributed to several factors, including limited funding periods, conflicting timeframes, lack of good management skills and lack of coordination between key donors. In addition there seems to be a common checklist of actors who are engaged by those looking to implement activities related to peacebuilding, which, although going some way towards achieving inclusivity, may repeatedly exclude other groups within communities, including marginalised youth.

Women on their way to the market in Manatuto.



## Recommendations

### For the Timor-Leste government

During and following UNTAET, the State was captured by a small elite (politicians and elite NGOs) at the capital level who, in the absence of a strong civil society, ended up prioritising personal and party interests and failed to address key issues that are of concern to the majority of the population. In order to discourage the top-down approach to peacebuilding initiatives, the government should promote better coordination between district and Dili-based peacebuilding programmes, so as to engage local communities, in particular marginalised groups, in the design and implementation processes of major peacebuilding initiatives. This also would allow the government to develop and incorporate specific peacebuilding initiatives addressing research-based peace priorities in its overall National Development Programme.

### For the international community

Broad-based dialogue initiatives that bring together ordinary citizens and the leadership in constructive dialogue as a way to compress vertical space require ongoing external support. The need to engage local communities, in particular those marginalised, so that their needs and priorities are fed into the design and implementation processes of major government peacebuilding initiatives is well known. Within this context, donors are best positioned to support specific research-based peace priorities to be incorporated as part of major national peacebuilding programmes in close collaboration with civil society organisations (CSOs). The influx of international agencies during UNTAET and throughout the successive crises, while beneficial on the one hand, have weakened relations between local and international NGOs, resulting in local groups feeling marginalised and underfunded by organisations with international connections who are better able to access funding.

### For civil society organisations

Despite funding limitations, CSOs need to find ways to promote the aspirations of communities to bring forward local priorities. A bottom-up approach can strengthen local ownership of initiatives and actions and encourage communities to take the lead in a solution-driven process that builds on local knowledge and contexts.

On a practical level, it is important for CSOs in Timor-Leste to make every effort to include groups and individuals that are not always on the common checklist of local leaders and representatives, thereby ensuring that inclusion is maximised.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> OECD, (2010), The International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding; Contribution from Timor-Leste.

<sup>2</sup> [www.facebook.com/cepad.timorleste](http://www.facebook.com/cepad.timorleste)

<sup>3</sup> Emilia Pires; Timor-Leste Minister for Finance (2013), speech delivered to the 'Forum on Building Resilience to Fragility in Asia and the Pacific', Asian Development Bank, 6 June 2013.

## Country case study: Somalia

### Brief history and context

Since the collapse of the central state in 1991, Somalia has been a test case for various peacebuilding efforts at the local<sup>1</sup>, national and international levels. Some initiatives have been more successful than others. Local, community-driven peacebuilding efforts have led to the establishment of regional administrations such as Somaliland and Puntland among others. Traditional leaders in these polities have succeeded in establishing a modicum of stability and clan-based governance structures<sup>2</sup>. Comparatively, national peacebuilding efforts have been less successful. Some 14 national reconciliation efforts have taken place since 1991, resulting in various transitional governments in Mogadishu. These chronically weak entities have struggled to re-establish state institutions and to extend their writ beyond the capital. In September 2012, 135 traditional elders representing all Somali clans elected the first non-transitional parliament. The new MPs, in turn, elected a president who then appointed a prime minister, who formed a government. Despite tremendous international recognition and support, like its predecessor transitional government it continues to struggle with peacebuilding and true reconciliation efforts as the fight with al-Shabaab rages across the country.



Old Center of Mogadishu.

### Partner organisation and study methodology

The Inclusive peacebuilding study in Somalia was undertaken by the Heritage Institute for Policy Studies (HIPS)<sup>3</sup>, an independent, non-partisan, non-profit policy research and analysis institute based in Mogadishu. HIPS works to inform public policy by providing independent empirical research and analysis, and creating an enabling environment for inclusive dialogue, with a mission to advance peace, the rule of law and a culture of learning in Somalia.



For this study, two focus group discussions and 15 individual interviews took place in January-February 2014 in Mogadishu and in Garowe, the capital of Puntland region. Participants came from various sectors of society, including traditional elders, religious leaders, women's organisations, academia, youth, media, arts organisations and politicians.

## Main inclusivity issues raised in the study

### *Traditional elders have a key role to play*



Traditional elders. |

Somali traditional elders, deriving their authority from representing their clans, have historically been the primary custodians of peace and reconciliation portfolios within Somali society. Traditionally, there are three ways that a person can become an elder. The first is through being selected/elected by a committee representing his clan or sub-clan. Second, a person can inherit the status of elder from his father. And third, an elder may be appointed by authorities outside of the traditional framework, such as the government. The latter is often the least effective method.

Communities entrust clan leaders with significant peacemaking and reconciliation responsibilities. These duties involve preventing and resolving conflicts both within the clan or sub-clan and with other clans or sub-clans. Traditional or customary Somali law (*xeer*) and the Islamic legal system of shari'a provide the legal foundation to resolve disputes.

According to the practice of *xeer*, clan elders have the responsibility to pay and collect *diya* (blood money) from clan members if someone from a particular clan kills a member or members of another clan, and vice versa. Clan elders' involvement may be required in a variety of peace processes including mediation in land disputes, power and pastoral land-sharing conflicts, and even disputes over power-sharing within factions of clan militias.

Some Somali regions have incorporated the traditional elder roles into a modern state governance system. The northwestern region of Somaliland, which is seeking to secede from the rest of the country, has effectively capitalised on the moral authority of traditional elders. The upper house in Somaliland's parliament, known as the Guurti, is tasked to maintain peace and serve as the ultimate arbiter of intra-communal conflicts. Likewise, Puntland's traditional elders, the Isimo, though not formalised, have been responsible for peacebuilding and statebuilding, selecting parliamentarians from their clans/sub-clans, resolving internal conflicts and providing traditional wisdom and guidance to the regional administration. Traditional leadership in Puntland and Somaliland is largely credited for making the two polities the most stable parts of Somalia.

In south-central Somalia, especially the capital, Mogadishu, the authority of traditional leadership has been significantly diminished. Between 1991 and 2006, warlords usurped the powers of the traditional leaders; and since 2006, political elites have systemically marginalised traditional leadership. Still, traditional elders retain some authority. In 2012, 135 traditional elders representing all Somali clans, including those in Somaliland and Puntland, selected 275 individuals to sit in the new federal parliament. The new MPs, in turn, elected Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as the national president.

However, while they duly participated in national peacebuilding efforts, such as the 2012 initiative, south-central traditional elders have been unsuccessful in exercising their moral authority within their local polities. Exceptions do exist. The traditional elders of Sa'ad sub-clan of Habar-Gidir (Hawiye) have successfully established Galmudug State, with its capital in South Galkayo. Similarly, its sister sub-clan, Saleebaan, has helped establish the Himan and Heeb administration, headquartered in Adado in central Somalia. Despite being small, these two polities are relatively stable and have a governance structure underpinned by traditional authorities.

The case study found that traditional elders in south-central Somalia are likely to remain weaker than their peers in Somaliland and Puntland as long as their local peacebuilding engagement remains limited and inconsistent. The same is true in south-central Somalia, including Mogadishu, the seat of the federal government where domestic and external actors jockey for power.



### *Women's participation is critical*

Despite Somalia's traditionally patriarchal structures and clan-based societies, women all over the Somali regions have been contributing positively to peacebuilding and social reconciliation for decades. In fact they have been, in some cases, the principal agents of peace<sup>4</sup>. A relevant example can be found in the divided town of Galkayo. The north of the town is controlled by Puntland, the south by Galmudug. Transcending this artificial boundary, women from both sides have formed a committee for mediation and reconciliation that deals with problems related to trade flow and sometimes even with outright conflict. It also has been training women to pass on their skills in conflict resolution and conflict prevention, including analytical and leadership skills.

Fishermen at the port of Mogadishu.

In traditional Somali society, it is usually men, specifically the traditional elders, who have both the means and the authority to make peace through dialogue and mediation. However, in many ways there is arguably no sector of Somali society that has been more impacted by the civil war than Somali women. Women have lost their husbands and sons and have had to face the situation of being the sole breadwinners in the family. In a time when the gun is the most trusted medium of exchange, women have been pivotal to the preservation of families and communities.

There is a saying in Somalia that ‘women can bring peace but only men can put it into action’. In peacebuilding, men tend to focus on a political arrangement, assuming that this will guarantee peace. Women’s views on peace could be seen as more nuanced. Women tend to focus on a range of issues, including sustainable livelihoods, education, and practical reconciliation among communities. As wives, mothers, businesswomen and members of civil society, women have also been able to influence elders and others to intervene in conflict while mobilising resources to finance peace and reconciliation. While typically excluded from decision-making forums, women have a position within the clan system that gives them the ability to bridge divisions and to act as a conduit for dialogue between parties in conflict.

Women have very limited opportunities to participate in formal peace processes and have to struggle to get their due space. They also have to fight for political participation. In 2012, key stakeholders agreed, under intense international pressure, to allocate 30 per cent of federal parliament seats to women. When traditional elders eventually selected MPs, women received a disappointing 13 per cent in a 275-member legislature. Entire clans and sub-clans, particularly those from the northeast and northwest, where the role of traditional elders is more powerful, failed to select women MPs. Focus group participants highlighted this paradox: how women’s role in formal politics is weaker in regions where traditional elders are stronger.

Disenfranchisement of women is more pronounced in Puntland, where only two women have been selected into the 66-member regional legislature. In what is widely viewed as a silver lining, women account for 11 per cent of the new Puntland cabinet. Women also hold two seats in the 25-member federal cabinet. Both Somali traditional code and Islamic law offer some latitude and protection for women<sup>5</sup>. Sadly, it is difficult to get these protections and rights in practice.

Since the collapse of the national government 23 years ago, the life and role of women across the Somali regions have changed dramatically. Women lost the legal status and access to expansion of women’s rights that had been afforded to them. While women have actively engaged in peacebuilding, the gendered nature of clan-based politics means that they are typically excluded from formal participation in peace talks. A contributing factor is the perception (or reality) of the divided loyalty of women within the clan system. A married woman is seen as loyal to her husband’s (or children’s) clan first, and then to her own clan. As a matter of principle, therefore, traditional elders lack faith in women representing them in negotiating and decision-making forums.



Women in Puntland and south-central Somalia campaign for political and leadership positions and build coalitions to advance their role. However, although some civil society organisations (CSOs) support women's causes, their clout and influence are limited and need to be strengthened.

### *Civil society, if strengthened, can ensure more inclusive peacebuilding*

Somali civil society groups play an important role in peacebuilding, economic and political development and, crucially, amplifying the voices of civilians. However, civil society has struggled to get a leadership role in Somalia's clan-obsessed reconciliation process. CSOs have participated in the national and international peace and statebuilding reconciliation processes over the years. In fact, they dominated the Arta conference held in Djibouti in 2000 that resulted in the formation of the Transitional National Government (TNG). There was consensus among those consulted during the study that the Arta conference was the most successful of all reconciliation efforts because all the participants were individuals representing various sectors, including intellectuals, educators, women's organisations, and those elites from civil society that have not taken part in the civil war. The idea behind this conference came from Somali intellectuals within civil society; the agenda-setting, organisation and management of the conference was driven by Somalis from civil society; and the Djibouti government played a facilitator role. It was no surprise, therefore, that women were recognised as the 'Sixth Clan' – a unit of their own that gives them a quota in the parliament. This is seen as a watershed moment in Somali history.

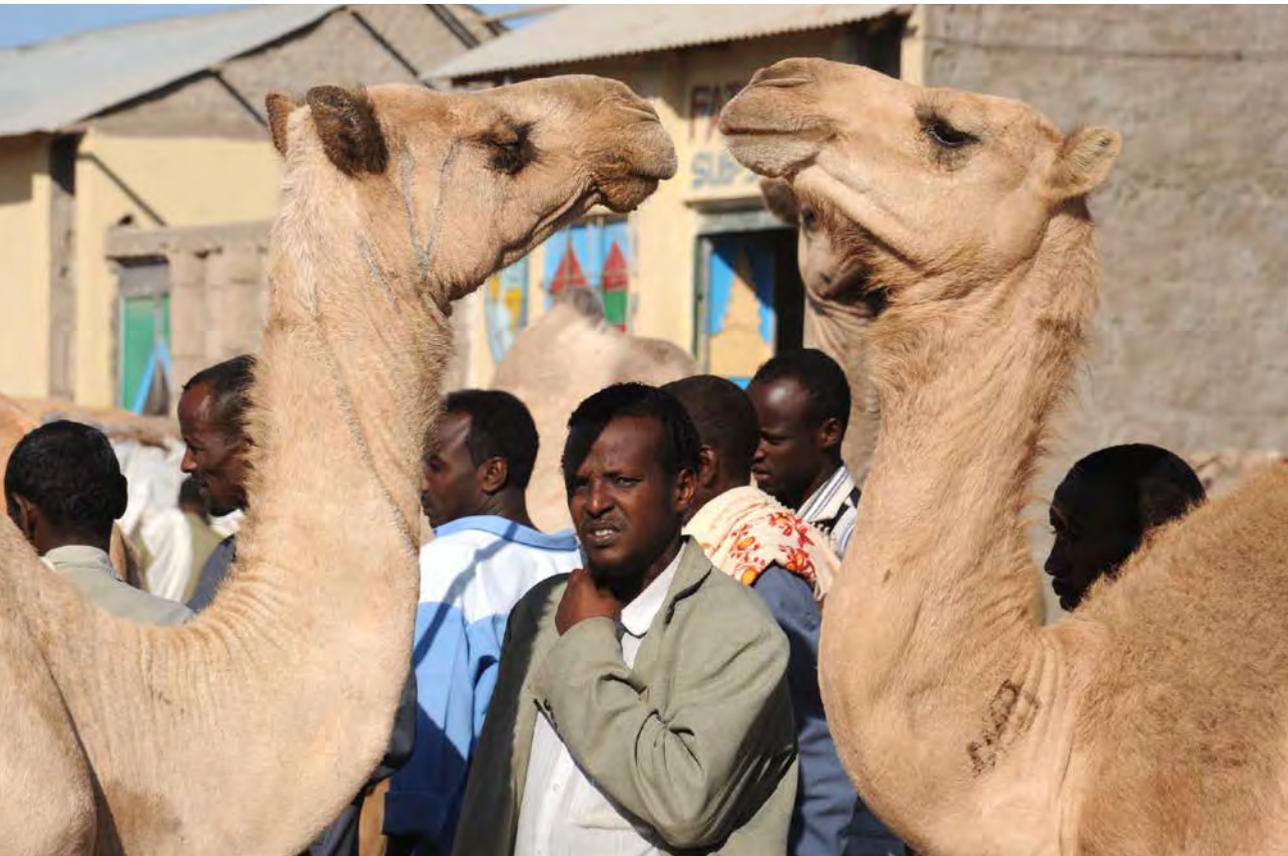
The process also recognised traditional elders' mediation role, helping the elites from different clans to express their grievances and forgive one another. However, the Arta conference ultimately failed because the neighbouring countries opposed the outcome and undermined it by drawing on the support of warlords who were not invited to the conference.

Civil society has served as the voice of citizens and is striving to empower women, youth and marginalised groups. Civil society groups are also participating in the recovery and governing of the country. However, Somali CSOs are nascent and suffer from a lack of adequate capacity and resources. If civil society's role is advanced, it can become a key pillar of peace and statebuilding, engage in political and policy processes, and monitor the implementation of the Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals in the New Deal Compact for Somalia<sup>6</sup>. Currently, two individuals representing civil society sit on the High Panel of the Compact.

The New Deal Compact, also known as the Somali Compact.



The New Deal Compact, also known as the Somali Compact, has been agreed by donors and the Somali government, and recognises the role of all social groups, including women, civil society, youth and marginalised communities. Though the clauses and deliverables of the New Deal strike all the right notes – such as inclusive politics, security and justice – gender is framed as a cross-cutting issue, and it is not clear how gender equality and equity will be implemented in the Compact.



Questions also remain over what mechanism would be used and how civil society will be engaged in statebuilding efforts. A number of civil society leaders are participating in consultations with the government and development partners on the implementation of the New Deal Compact. The fact that the senior leadership of the current federal government, including the president, as well as the Speaker of the parliament, is comprised of prominent civil society individuals creates some optimism. But the reality is that these individuals ascended to power through the traditional system: the clan elders.

### *Perspectives on peacebuilding vary across the country*

Prolonged civil war has led to a fragmented Somali society. Views across Somalia are generally polarised across clan and other sectarian lines. Puntland has enjoyed relative stability since it was formed as a semi-autonomous region in 1998. Mogadishu continues to struggle as the seat of the federal government, but it has made substantial progress in the past few years.

Peacebuilding perspectives shared during the study varied in Mogadishu and in Puntland. In Mogadishu the need to strengthen formal state structures, such as security institutions and reconciliation and constitutional bodies, is seen as essential to advance peacebuilding and statebuilding goals. Non-state structures, such as traditional elders are viewed with scepticism. The absence of strong female participation is viewed as an obstacle to long-term peacebuilding, as is the patriarchal traditional leadership in Mogadishu.

In Puntland, a lot of emphasis was put on the role of traditional elders in peacebuilding. Drawing on their own successful experience in the formation of Puntland in 1998 – a process heralded by traditional elders – participants advocated a greater role for non-state structures such as the Isimo (Puntland elders), both at the regional and federal level. Many wanted to institutionalise the role of traditional elders, much as Somaliland did with its upper house of parliament. Given that traditional leadership is patriarchal, many Puntland participants were willing to compromise the role of women as they did not view them in the same light as elders. Furthermore, Puntland participants emphasised stronger federal member states and a weaker federal government. Again, this is consistent with their experience. Finally, Puntland participants expressed greater grievances about other communities. Many participants said they had lost relatives and property in Mogadishu.

Crucially, participants in both areas agreed on the viability and sustainability of locally owned peacebuilding processes. National and international initiatives were universally seen as counterproductive if not firmly rooted in local initiatives. Most of the internationally sponsored conferences Somalia has seen since 1991 were held outside of the country, mainly in neighbouring Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya and Yemen, and millions of dollars were spent.



Hargeisa is the largest city and capital of Somaliland.

With the exception of Arta, all the internationally sponsored peace processes were controlled by some of the neighbouring countries, especially Ethiopia and Kenya. Other international actors had no common agenda, and in some cases had conflicting aims. Neighbouring countries manipulated the selection process of the participants including parliamentarians who would in return select the head of the state. Somalis have seen the outcome of these internationally sponsored statebuilding processes, and the transitional governments they produced, as top-down solutions not based on the will of the Somali people and thus without popular backing.

## Recommendations

Inclusive politics will not be possible as long as a patriarchal political landscape is exercising the 4.5 clan formula, which excludes women and youth from clan power-sharing and decision-making positions<sup>7</sup>. Gender equity needs to be integrated into the political process, with an increase in women's participation at all levels including the Cabinet, the federal parliament, district, village and neighbourhood administrations, government ministries and agencies, commissions, and the security sector.

Individuals who have committed egregious crimes, and those who have stolen public funds, should be banned from holding leadership positions in the government, parliament and civil service. In 2012, a clause in the Constitution banned ‘criminals’ from ascending to national positions. But many warlords entered parliament, despite objections from many corners, on the premise that they had never been convicted in a court of law.

Somalis need a true reconciliation process, from village level to district, to regional, to national, in which people discuss the impact that the civil war has had, the role they themselves played and the grievances they suffered, and where they can admit their guilt and forgive one another. The traditional elders need to work in collaboration with other peace advocates including civil society groups, religious leaders, women and youth. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, stipulated in the Provisional Constitution, has to be created.

Locally owned peacebuilding processes have the best chance of success. While views on the role of traditional structures, and formal and informal mechanisms for conflict resolution may vary, there is general agreement that international efforts cannot be a substitute for local initiatives. The international community can provide technical and other material support; it also can support more grassroots-level peacebuilding efforts. In large cities, peace advocates, especially youth, could be trained at the neighbourhood level, while in rural areas training could take place at village, district, and regional levels. The international community could provide these peace advocates with various peace education materials. There is a dire need to change the culture of violence into a culture of peace. If communities are empowered to resolve conflicts in their neighbourhoods, a culture of peace can gradually spread to the national level.

Finally, the international community should advocate for the formation of a national independent commission that promotes local peacebuilding within the framework of national peacebuilding and statebuilding priorities. A delicate balance is needed to ensure that local peacebuilding instruments are strengthened, but not at the expense of national statebuilding objectives.

<sup>1</sup> ‘Local’ refers to a specific region or sub-clan level.

<sup>2</sup> Scholars have called this phenomenon the ‘building-block approach’ to statebuilding.

<sup>3</sup> [www.heritageinstitute.org](http://www.heritageinstitute.org)

<sup>4</sup> Interpeace and CRD (the Centre for Research and Development), in their field-based research titled *The Search for Peace: Community-based Peace Processes in South Central-Somalia*, explain extensively women’s stellar role as mobilisers and funders of peace efforts. Shukria Dini, in her study *Women Building Peace: Somali Women in Puntland and Somaliland*, discusses women’s informal role as peacemakers and also some cases where, through the practice of Godob-reeb or Godob-tir, peace brides have been exchanged to help resolve the most intractable conflicts.

<sup>5</sup> Women can own properties, engage business and even annul marriages.

<sup>6</sup> Similar to Liberia and Timor-Leste, Somalia has endorsed the New Deal. For more information, see [www.pbsdialogue.org/en/](http://www.pbsdialogue.org/en/)

<sup>7</sup> The 4.5 clan power-sharing formula gives a full share to each of the four major clans (Darood, Digil and Mirifle, Dir and Hawiye) and a half-share to the remaining clans, considered to be minority groups.

## Country case study: Burma/Myanmar

### Brief background and context

The ethnically diverse Burma/Myanmar<sup>1</sup> has been mired in civil war since it gained independence from Britain in 1948. Ethnic armed groups have been fighting the Bamar-dominated military regime for ethnic rights and greater autonomy. Successive regimes have pursued policies of cultural and religious unification and have consequently oppressed ethnic rights, further fuelling conflict. Civilians in ethnic areas have suffered severely from decades of conflict, including military attacks by the Myanmar army and human rights abuses by both the army and the civil authorities.

After 60 years of military dictatorship, the quasi-civilian government that came to power after the 2010 elections initiated a reform process including a peace initiative. Negotiations for a nationwide ceasefire agreement have been perceived by many as the best chance of initiating a real peace process in many years. However, clashes have continued in Kachin, Shan and Karen states; and as of December 2015 the 'nationwide' ceasefire agreement has only been signed by a few ethnic armed groups. In addition, the political dialogue that needs to address the root causes of conflict, and deal with controversial issues of federalism and power-sharing, is yet to be initiated. Major obstacles to both the peace process and democratisation at large remain in the country's constitution.

### Partner organisation and study methodology

The inclusive peacebuilding study in Myanmar was undertaken by Ar Yone Oo Social Development Association (AYO)<sup>2</sup>, a non-political and non-sectarian organisation dedicated to reducing poverty and human suffering. AYO operates in different parts of the country, including Shan, Mon, Rakhine and Chin states, and Bagu, Sagaing and Magwe regions. Activities range from humanitarian and development assistance to capacity-building on peace and conflict and gender issues for local civil society and political party leaders.



For this study, AYO researchers and staff conducted field research in late 2014 in Bago Region, where the Karen National Union (KNU) is active, and in Mon State where the New Mon State Party Army (NMSP) and a few smaller armed groups are active. A total of 248 informants from seven villages in each of the two regions took part in interviews and focus group discussions. Eighty per cent of the respondents were ethnic Kayin or Mon. Most were Christian or Buddhist, while a limited number were Muslims, Hindus or animists.

## Main inclusivity issues raised in the study

With a large number of ethnic armed groups active in different areas, and the varied experiences of conflict and ceasefires in the past, local views on the ongoing peace process vary in different communities across the country. With ongoing negotiations and a quickly changing political landscape, the local perspectives may also have been modified in the year that has passed since the study was conducted. Nevertheless, the inclusivity-related findings of the study are of a general nature and reveal challenges that will probably need attention for many years to come.

### *Lack of transparency and trust*

While most people consulted in this study consider the general public to be the main stakeholder of the peace process, the ceasefire negotiations taking place at the national level in Myanmar still seem for the most part disconnected from local populations. Communities in the Kayin areas were aware that ceasefire negotiations were taking place but they were for the most part unaware of the contents and nature of the deals. Reasons given for this disconnect include lack of information from the negotiating parties as well as limited access to media in remote areas. People in the Mon area, who have experienced ceasefire for a longer period of time, have greater access to local and international media, but the relationships between local people and the leaders of the ethnic armed groups still seem rather weak.

The level of expectations of the negotiations varies, with ordinary people interviewed showing greater optimism about the process than politicians. Nevertheless, many express concern that the peace process will not be sustainable. There is a lack of trust in the government and to some extent also in the ethnic armed groups that represent the grassroots populations. This pessimism could be related to lack of inclusion, but likely more so to previous negative experiences from decades of unresolved conflict.

### *Local everyday needs above national politics*

At the grassroots level, people seem to be more concerned with local politics that have an immediate impact on their everyday lives than with political processes at the distant national level. In consequence, they focus their attention on the implications of the ceasefire negotiations on their local areas. For example, the Kayin villagers interviewed were worried about resumption of conflict in their areas. Thus, they showed interest in the national ceasefire agreements with regard to the movements and activities of Myanmar army troops and the various



development initiatives that would be brought to the local areas. Those living in areas that experienced conflicts until 2012 appreciate the newly gained ability to move around and engage in livelihood activities freely since the ceasefire agreement was settled.

The lack of involvement in national politics also has to do with past disappointments and fear during decades of conflict and violence. War-weary, mired in poverty and isolation, and with personal experience of violence, in particular the Kayin interviewees expressed a preference for staying out of politics.

In addition, there is a tendency to take interest in – and to trust – one’s own ethnic group. Long periods of isolation and limited interethnic interaction have led to a low degree of trust in ‘outsiders’ of different ethnicity among local populations in certain ceasefire areas. In particular, the study reveals strong distrust in the Bamar populations on the part of the local Kayin residents, whose first encounters with the Bamar usually took place through the Myanmar army who came to burn down their villages and perpetrated severe abuses, such as torture and rape.



### *Lack of knowledge on how to contribute*

The study also suggests that local people have no clear understanding of their potential to contribute to and participate in the peacebuilding process. Communities are unaware of their right to make inputs into national efforts that have immediate impacts on their lives. This may have to do with a combination of factors, such as lack of interest in national policies, lack of understanding about the peace process, and their perceived lack of capacity to contribute to the process – which is seen as taking place at a distant ‘national’ level.

In the Myanmar context, for instance, women’s participation in the peace process is usually seen as women playing a role in high-profile peace negotiations. While women are underrepresented at the ceasefire and peace negotiations, they contribute actively in other ways. There is a need to broaden the definition of peacebuilding and raise awareness among the public about the multiple, practical and manageable contributions they can make towards rebuilding their communities. More awareness is needed of the benefits of inclusive political participation and women’s participation in peacebuilding.

One way that local communities should be allowed to make a collective input to peacebuilding is to give them a greater say over business activities, particularly large-scale extractive projects. Currently, communities experience their local livelihood being threatened by such activities, but they have very little influence over the development of these projects.

### *Lack of information on peace initiatives*

Ceasefires and peace-monitoring groups have been formed, but it seems that grassroots populations are often unaware of their existence. Trust-building conferences, and meetings among civil society groups, political parties and ethnic armed groups, have been held among the respective ethnic nationalities. However, there has been very little coordination among groups working to promote peace in the region.

While there are many organisations that claim to work on peacebuilding initiatives, there is not enough information about the exact activities and objectives of these organisations. More information about peacebuilding actors and activities is necessary to promote coordination and to reduce redundancy and overlapping areas of activities. Such information would also be helpful for grassroots populations, who are the first to experience the impact of ceasefire and peace-related activities. It is important to identify challenges faced by existing ceasefire- and peace-monitoring groups, and to identify ways of strengthening such groups, so that they can be fully utilised.

In addition to ceasefire- and peace-monitoring groups, there are many community-based organisations working on development projects and self-empowerment. A majority of them are not directly and deliberately focused on peacebuilding efforts, but some activities have the potential to facilitate participation by grassroots populations within their local community and regions.



## Recommendations

The study concludes with several recommendations for international peacebuilding actors:

**Facilitate information flows:** The Myanmar government and ethnic armed groups should be encouraged to provide up-to-date information about national ceasefire agreements to local populations. The information can also be disseminated by an unbiased third-party group, which could also serve as a channel to communicate people's voices to policy-makers. International actors should collaborate with local partners and ethnic media organisations to increase communication channels and dissemination of news about ceasefire negotiations, and offer objective analysis of the different perspectives on and disagreements over the negotiations.

**Research public opinion:** Further research is needed on people's perception of the Myanmar army, ethnic armed organisations and political parties that represent them. A systematic assessment of public opinion will serve as a bridge between ethnic constituencies and political armed and non-armed organisations by shedding light on the grassroots perspectives on the ceasefire process. It will also provide important information about how the public would actually want these organisations to represent them and could identify changes these organisations could make so as to be perceived more positively by various segments of ethnic nationalities.

**Assess and support peace-monitoring initiatives:** The capacity of existing ceasefire and peace-monitoring groups, and the nature and depth of their connection with local populations, should be further assessed. The capacity of regional ceasefire and peace-monitoring committees should be strengthened, and more extensive involvement with local populations be encouraged, so that people can report violation of ceasefire agreements. International actors could assist in undertaking such assessments and also help establish peace-monitoring committees at the township level where there is a higher level of security. These committees must act as a neutral third party, be accepted by both sides and backed by credible international actors, so that people feel safe to report on violations. The committees must also be staffed by paid professionals who have the knowledge, training and expertise to assess the credibility of the complaints. Lastly, information exchange and coordination among peacebuilding actors is critical.

**Support to local communities:** Local communities should be empowered through humanitarian and development projects. International actors should work with local organisations to implement income-generating activities in conflict-affected communities, in order to sustain their livelihoods. In addition, local people's mental and physical security should be regained through capacity-building, mental health assistance and trauma-healing programmes. An increase in humanitarian and development activities that address the needs of the local populations and generate income would not only reduce poverty, but also promote the capacity and empowerment of residents in post-conflict areas.



Furthermore, local populations should be made aware of their right to be consulted about any large- and medium-scale extractive activities that would have potential social and environment consequences for their communities.

**Promote community involvement in peacebuilding:** In order for grassroots communities to become more active in the peace process, there is also a need for awareness-raising on citizens' rights to participate in peacebuilding. International actors should use a broad definition of peacebuilding and work with local organisations to help identify the many roles people can play in this process. Relevant, manageable and practical ways that grassroots populations can positively contribute to peace should be highlighted. Awareness and space must also be created for women's participation in peacebuilding.

**Capacity of civil society:** International actors should assist in expanding the capacity of civil society groups currently working in local areas, by providing funding and training to local organisations.

**Increase interethnic interaction:** Increased trust and reconciliation between different ethnic and religious communities should be promoted through the creation of spaces for mediation, conflict-resolution and cooperation between organisations of different ethnic origin. Successful cooperation and mutually beneficial working relationships in one area could spill over to other areas of cooperation. More communication and conversation, however, do not automatically translate into better social relationships. For instance, any tensions arising from these new relationships could reinforce the prevailing mutual distrust and anxiety, which is why caution is needed.

<sup>1</sup> The military regime changed the name of the country from Burma to Myanmar in 1989. The name is still contested and the use of the one or the other can be seen as a political statement. In this case study we use Myanmar since that is the name used by our local partner.

<sup>2</sup> [www.aryoneoo-ngo.org/](http://www.aryoneoo-ngo.org/)

# 3

## Thematic elaborations



# Reforming UN mediation through inclusion of traditional peacemakers

Antti Pentikäinen

*The New York Review of Books* recently published an article suggesting that the spread of the Islamic State (IS), also known as ISIS, is as irreversible as the expansion of the Roman Empire<sup>1</sup>. At the same time the refugee crisis seems to have taken European decision-makers by surprise. The desperation of millions of people in the European neighbourhood continues to be largely unaddressed.

The interlinkage of migration, conflicts and extremism may create a vicious cycle that spins off to destabilise Europe along with the rest of the world. It is likely that decision-makers in the European Union and the United States have not yet fully realised the extent of the challenges that the European region is now facing and the magnitude of responses required.

Relatively recent events highlight the urgency. Perhaps the greatest opportunity for the Mediterranean and Middle East regions was the Arab Spring. Few, however, were able to predict the disasters that would ensue. Certainly, the inability of decision-makers to react to the situation and provide appropriate economic and political frameworks for dialogue, inclusion and peaceful reform exacerbated the disastrous situation.

During this time, the United Nations has been struggling to find solutions to many of the current conflicts on its agenda. Besides the Security Council's inability to reach agreements, the entire UN approach to mediation and national dialogue has been failing.

## Previously applied tools are not working

Peace mediation and national dialogue efforts have entered a new and complex era. The situation is particularly challenging in fragile states, where aid and development tools are not enabling rapid enough progress in legitimate governance for newly developed and weak institutions. The challenge from radical groups is particularly strong in fragile states, which reflects the broader challenges in peace mediation and national dialogue. In this era, the mediation and dialogue tools that were created for traditional inter- or intra-state conflicts have become ineffective.

Yemen offers an interesting example. Despite the usual coordination challenges, the National Dialogue process in Yemen in 2013<sup>2</sup> is considered by many experts a textbook model according to previous standards of mediation and dialogue. It was supported by some of the best peace mediation and national

dialogue experts working with the UN. There was wide representation from Yemeni society and the parties involved were able to reach an agreement. However, Yemen has since then entered a very destructive spiral of violence, which is likely to lead the country into long-term chaos.

Perhaps the process remained too elite-centred and did not facilitate enough grassroots reconciliation. More importantly, it failed to address some of the crucial underlying causes of conflict, which raises questions as to whether the standard approach to dialogue gives sufficient consideration to the need to build legitimacy before entering into dialogue about how to establish or reform institutions. During the process, the clans associated with Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) signalled willingness to participate in the process, but there was neither the framework nor the political will to explore that possibility. The process also was not able to provide a framework for the inclusion of Houthis, nor did it address the distrust between Saudi Arabia and Iran that is a key reason for the renewed cycle of violence.

Any dialogue process in fragile situations where there is potential for proxy wars should prioritise helping traditional clan and tribal structures to reconcile, with the purpose of building an inclusive state. The process also needs to include a framework for dealing with the interests of neighbouring states, and for supporting the establishment of an internationally protected space where the longer-term efforts of statebuilding can take place.



Yemen is likely to become a long-term source of instability spinning off to the Horn of Africa and beyond. If ISIS is defeated militarily in Syria and Iraq, it will likely find a way to establish its presence in Yemen. Similarly, extremist movements expand to different regions, either as invited mercenaries or on their own opportunistic initiative, involving themselves in regional disputes and conflicts where they eventually outnumber the local armed groups they initially supported, and taking over the battle to advance their violent ambitions.

With the presence of these movements, local conflict resolution becomes more challenging than ever. These extremist groups link local battles to global grievances and tend to be more violent than local armed groups. Current international norms also make communication with these groups and the clans associated with them even more difficult, although exactly such tribes, clans and groups are necessary to create the environment required for sustainable peacebuilding. Therefore, greater attention needs to be given to the traditional fabric and management of internal conflicts, as well as an international space created for addressing the possible interest of states that continue to fund and arm proxies that can easily derail any effort.

## **Fragile states are vulnerable to extremism**

Terrorist organisations have for a long time aimed to establish and sustain a presence in fragile or unstable environments, and integrate their ambitions with local struggles. The international response to terrorism has been to block these groups and their affiliated clans from the political process.

This leaves local communities under the influence of the extremist groups in a very difficult and vulnerable situation. Clan and religious leaders that oppose the agenda or methods of the terrorist organisations are targeted and killed. Through these killings, terrorist organisations eventually aim to direct clans and entire tribes towards their cause in order to provide cover and to control broader and broader territories.

The inter-linkage of local tribes and clans with terrorist groups is a complex combination of lost aspirations of inclusion, joint power struggles, fear and mere survival. The way ISIS took over the Yarmouk refugee camp close to Damascus illustrates the phenomenon<sup>3</sup>. ISIS first established its presence in a non-significant area called Hajjar al-Aswad, where a few families were trying to survive in the midst of the fighting between the Syrian army and Yarmouk Palestinian groups. They initially tried to take over the camp by liaising with the Al-Nusra Front, an Al-Qaeda linked jihadist group in Syria, but failed because the Palestinian groups and families that defended Yarmouk were able to stick together and fought to control the situation themselves. The executions of local leaders, disruption of social services and the stricter religious interpretation promoted by ISIS alienated them from Palestinian groups. ISIS was pushed back into no-man's-land, but came back

with a more sophisticated approach. They studied the grievances among the Palestinians and won over the families that felt that an alliance with ISIS would benefit them more. These family members were given positions within ISIS, which then launched a new offensive, again assisted by the al-Nusra Front, and quickly took over the majority of Yarmouk, pushing the old Palestinian militias and powerful families into a small corner and later calling for a full-scale war against Hamas and other groups. Similar processes are now taking place in Palestinian camps in Lebanon and Jordan.

These developments illustrate how vulnerable fragile states and areas are to infiltration by ISIS and other terrorist organisations. Any grievances may leave a door open for these groups to establish a presence and start to take over the local struggle. Marriages between the foreign fighters and the daughters of tribal chiefs make these groups part of the ISIS ‘family’.

Often the local government or internationally backed militias claim that these tribes are extremist and should be labelled as terrorist and not engaged. That, however, creates a barrier to dialogue and to resolving the conflict. Only through dialogue and inclusion can these tribes come out of the alliance with terrorist organisations and be seen as the crucial assets for peace that they are.

It is important to recognise and understand the pressures and dangers these actors confront (as presented in a simplified way in the graph).



To successfully counter and prevent extremism these clans would need to turn against actors who promote terrorism and violent religious interpretations. Unless the clan sees a better future in following a different route, such as genuine inclusion in the political process, reconciliation and opportunities for economic development, this is unlikely to happen. International responses with military intervention and cases where the stigma of terrorism has been attached to militias, clans and tribes that oppose the local government exacerbate the situation.

Fragile states have been a driving force behind efforts to reform the international aid architecture. These efforts have not, however, led to significant change in approaches to fragility and to speeding up support efforts. Instead of helping to resolve local disputes and strengthening the legitimacy of fragile states, we are seeing them fail over and over again, making them more likely to fall into the hands of extremists.

Conflicts also have an impact on the younger generation’s ability to obtain a normal education and therefore affects communities’ ability to acquire and develop resilience. The impact of droughts is aggravated by conflict and isolation and often leads to famine. All these contribute to migration, and to greater numbers seeking asylum.



Many humanitarian and development aid organisations face challenges operating in fragile states, such as restricted mobility and operational capability, as extremist groups often do not recognise NGOs' traditional impartiality. Security risks have also made it too costly to sustain long-term operational capacity. International donors face difficulty finding accountable implementers, while lack of capacity and corruption often prevent direct support for local governments and institutions. Without significant changes in international political frameworks that support peacebuilding, and reforms to the UN's engagement, fragile states are unlikely to be able to complete their transition to robust states.

## **Inclusion of traditional and religious peacemakers is crucial**

A new approach, where local communities are given a greater role in mediation and dialogue processes, requires a paradigm shift at the UN and within the broader international community. Given the increasing power and greater international mobility of terrorist organisations, however, there is no time to wait for change. Negative scenarios are becoming increasingly likely in many fragile states. Local communities are often the only actors who have the ability to challenge the rising influence of terrorist organisations in their respective areas. Therefore, the presence of Traditional and Faith-motivated Inside Mediators (TFIM)<sup>4</sup> within these communities, as opinion leaders, spokespersons and middlemen, is crucially important.

At the core of this approach is the understanding that in the end mediation is not about outside technical expertise or leadership but about the right to peace for the people living in conflict areas. However, decisions affecting their lives are often taken out of their hands. In many prolonged conflicts

civilian populations are held hostage by circumstances and pay a heavy price either for the poor management of processes or for the lack of political will to advance a peaceful solution.

A grassroots approach alone does not, however, resolve all the problems. Local mediation efforts need to be supported and synchronised within a wider political framework and within an international agenda. The existing gap between international policy considerations and local mediation efforts needs to be bridged.

The already prominent position of religious actors at local levels is further strengthened by the fact that many radical movements adhere to religious ideologies. Religious and traditional leaders have a multifaceted role. They have exceptional connections with local communities and they can act as middlemen in dialogue with radical movements, but above all they have a key role in local peace mediation. Local peace mediation can direct local communities away from the influence of radical movements and pave the way to wider reconciliation.

In addition to religious and traditional leaders, special focus should be given to the role of peacemakers among the communities who may not have traditional authority, but act as opinion shapers and go-betweens. This is especially true since these peacemakers can act in the so-called 'grey zone' under the radical movements' sphere of influence, although this places the actors in an extremely vulnerable position.

Particularly difficult is the position of local communities under the influence of violent extremist and terrorist groups. These groups systematically alter religious interpretations and insist on stricter behaviour, which reduces religious and traditional community leaders' room to manoeuvre. Often these changes can be traced to state-sponsored ambitions to change the religious landscapes, where religion is used as a vehicle to expand power interests. These developments have even led to intra-Muslim and intra-Sunni cleansings.

## **Elders and local leaders can help where the UN is failing – the Somalia example**

Finn Church Aid's (FCA) findings based on interviews with more than 300 key actors in 2007, suggest that more comprehensive inclusion of tribal elders and religious leaders could alter the process and help to bring stability to Somalia<sup>5</sup>. After mapping the key actors, FCA started to convene representatives of key clans, first in Hargeisa and, later, throughout the country, leading to successful local reconciliation efforts. The UN was still focused on convening a limited number of actors outside Somalia (then in Djibouti) and pushing for a deal that was not rooted in the Somali social fabric. These UN-led efforts had failed 14 times before the establishment of the Djibouti process and formation of the transitional government led by Sheik Sharif Ahmed.

The UN Political Offices for Somalia (UNPOS) finally took a new course under the leadership of Margaret Vogt and, later, Augustine Mahiga. The end of the transition in 2012 came about through the ownership of Somali clan elders and leaders that helped to design the roadmap, convened in Mogadishu to approve the constitution and to select a parliament. However, the elders had to overcome one major obstacle. The UN Security Council tried, mainly at the initiative of the US, to take a shortcut and have the transitional parliament elect a new president. After the powerful alliance of elders had convened in Mogadishu, the FCA and Religions for Peace (RfP) brought their views to the attention of Security Council members, who agreed to the same elders leading the process. At their meeting the elders had promised to end the transition and create new and legitimate state institutions within one year – which they did<sup>6</sup>.

The Somalia case inspired the UN Mediation Support Unit (MSU) to consider enlarging the UN's toolbox to include working with traditional and religious actors. The Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) had already advanced multiple initiatives in which states and the UN would create and support better platforms for more inclusive dialogue at the policy level and ensure that UN peacebuilding reforms responded to the increasing need for more participatory and inclusive approaches.



The UN's approaches to peacebuilding, mediation and dialogue need to be changed to ensure inclusion of local communities, which hold traditional authority and have religious influence. UN agencies and missions need to increase their engagement with these local actors and build structures that facilitate interaction with groups that are outside the state structure or in conflict with fragile state structures. Local voices, including those of religious and traditional peacemakers, need to have access to the Security Council to be able to share their insights, knowledge and recommendations.

Various ongoing UN reforms<sup>7</sup> offer an opportunity to make concrete political and operational progress on some long-standing impediments to effective collective action, thanks to the convergence in time and content of a series of important UN review processes and global agendas in different sectors. There is an emerging sense that the UN peace and security architecture has not kept pace with evolving challenges and that a failure to come to terms with this gap will have serious consequences.

Preparations for Security  
Council meeting.



## The UN-initiated Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers

Following the UN Secretary-General’s report on mediation from 2012<sup>8</sup> the MSU, together with OIC, RfP, the UN Alliance for Civilisations (UNAOC) and FCA, initiated the establishment of a Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. The Network aims to increase cooperation among organisations that work with local religious and traditional peacemakers, developing joint mechanisms to provide more professional support to local efforts. The Network has also generated great interest among states and state-based organisations, such as the Government of Finland and the KAICIID<sup>9</sup> Dialogue Centre, which are currently major contributors to the Network.

The Network has started to establish mechanisms that enable the best experts in the field to provide timely support in planning and implementing mediation efforts. The idea is to bring already existing expertise into a Network of experts and organisations that are committed to the cause of assisting better local mediation efforts and to linking them with the UN and other actors who are engaged in formal negotiations. The Network consists of government representatives, NGOs that work with local TFIMs, peacemakers and other local actors.

The Network Secretariat works currently from Helsinki, Vienna, Bangkok, Brussels, Washington and New York, but is present through its members in all conflict areas. The Secretariat provides support to the Network and local peacemakers in four ways. The first is wider support for political inclusion in close cooperation with the UN. The second is support for local mediation efforts and stand-by support for local TFIMs. This includes, specifically, support for women as peacemakers both within the religious and traditional communities and in international policy-making. The third is providing advanced training and research that helps both diplomats and local actors. The fourth is help for local communities to express and deepen understanding of extremism and how to prevent it<sup>10</sup>.



Recently, member states supporting the Network, such as the US and Finland, have agreed to start a process of ensuring that UN peacebuilding reform incorporates outreach to traditional structures and local communities in conflict zones. However vulnerable the traditional and religious peacemakers might be, eventually they can evolve into mainstream actors in resolving current conflicts.

The question is not, in the end, about the capacity of outside actors. Peace is the right of the people living in the midst of conflict and they will ultimately not only define peace but also help to bring it about. The question is when and how the UN will be able to systematically reach out to them and support their efforts.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> [www.nybooks.com/shared/cbbd4b368e5e743c7fe99a0e373b78c9](http://www.nybooks.com/shared/cbbd4b368e5e743c7fe99a0e373b78c9)

<sup>2</sup> e.g. [www.hiwar-watani.org/](http://www.hiwar-watani.org/)

<sup>3</sup> [www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/10/isis-damascus-seize-yarmouk-refugee-camp](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/10/isis-damascus-seize-yarmouk-refugee-camp)

<sup>4</sup> This name has been suggested by the Berghof Foundation to describe local peacemakers who live in the midst of conflicts, use local methodologies and contacts, but are often neglected and face serious risks in their initiatives.

<sup>5</sup> [www.cmcfinland.fi/download/49261\\_Studies\\_1\\_2013\\_Lepisto.pdf?4e667800ade8d188](http://www.cmcfinland.fi/download/49261_Studies_1_2013_Lepisto.pdf?4e667800ade8d188)

<sup>6</sup> [www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13533312.2015.1059283](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13533312.2015.1059283)

<sup>7</sup> Peace and security reviews: the Peacebuilding Architecture Review; the Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations and the Global Study on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325, Sustainable development processes: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development etc.

<sup>8</sup> A/66/811

<sup>9</sup> The King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) was established by the states of Saudi-Arabia, Austria and Spain, and the Vatican is a permanent observer. The organisation is based in Vienna.

<sup>10</sup> [www.peacemakersnetwork.org](http://www.peacemakersnetwork.org)



**Antti Pentikäinen**, Executive Director of the Secretariat and Convener of the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers – and Special Envoy for the Prime Minister of Finland on the Migration Crisis.

Antti Pentikäinen has extensive mediation experience and a long history of humanitarian work. He has been facilitating UN efforts to reach out to insurgencies in several conflict zones. He has been Special Advisor to Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, co-founded the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) where he led its finance and administration division. He has been Executive Director of Finn Church Aid (FCA), Finland's largest development agency and has also served during 2010-2011 as Conflict Transformation Director of Religions for Peace. Prime Minister of Finland Juha Sipilä appointed Mr. Pentikäinen as his Special Envoy for the Migration Crisis and addressing the root causes.

## **The Council of Notables – relying on local structures and traditions for genuinely inclusive peacebuilding**

In northern Iraq, a group of prominent and influential tribal, religious and community leaders, formalised as a 22-member body known as the Kirkuk Council of Notables, is often called upon to intervene in Kirkuk's social, religious and legal conflicts. They do so using traditional practices.

The genesis of the Council of Notables can be traced back to an initiative of the Civil Society Organisation of Iraq (CSOI), an Iraqi organisation engaged in peacebuilding and education-oriented projects, and was originally modelled after a similar mechanism used in Egypt to resolve disputes in Muslim communities.

CSOI's decision, in 2003, to help form the Council of Notables came, in part, from recognition by CSOI leaders that they did not have social capital that could be applied in certain tribal and religious communities, but that there were individuals who had great influence in those communities that could be leveraged for the purpose of more effective conflict resolution peacebuilding. Instead of working as small fragmented groups, the Council would provide an opportunity to combine their activities and be more effective and systematic.

Kirkuk, in the northern region of Iraq, is an ethnically mixed city, home to Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen and Christian communities. With its location on top of large oil reserves, it is also a site of heightened political tension. There was a strong desire among CSOI members however for a peaceful, prosperous and harmonious Kirkuk – one in which citizens respect religious differences, value development and education, and support the study and practice of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It is within this context that the Council of Notables was launched.

Nineteen men and three women serve on the Council of Notables today, stemming from different tribal families and different professions. The 22 members are among the most esteemed and effective leaders in their respective Kirkuk communities. The Council's activities aimed at promoting peace and co-existence have received wide and favourable support from the community and from local authorities.

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The tribal system remains an effective ruling tool in several Iraqi communities. In some instances, the government requests assistance and guidance from notables on ways to peacefully resolve conflicts before those conflicts are referred to the judicial system. While the judicial system is tasked with dispensing justice, this in and of itself does not resolve conflict and, often, the root of the conflict remains. Without healing on the part of both aggrieved parties, there remains a greater chance for the conflict to fester and even escalate. The work of the Council is very much focused on mediating the conflict, arriving at a just punishment, and healing the wounds so that 'when the parties meet each other in the marketplace, they can smile at one another'.

Another case illustrates this: a travelling carpet salesman from Alton-Kopri, north-east of Kirkuk, was accused of having illicit sexual relations with a married woman. The woman's family took revenge on the carpet salesman – kidnapped, tortured and eventually killed him. The salesman was from the Ghili tribe and the woman from the Salihi tribe. The case was referred to the police but there was no satisfactory outcome since the police were unable to uncover any conclusive evidence for either claim. This outcome enraged the community and threatened to dissolve into more violence between the tribes. With both the security forces and political leaders unable to resolve the conflict, members of the Council of Notables were asked to help negotiate and settle the conflict.

The Council invested nearly two months in trying to understand the narratives and demands of both parties, a process that was crucial in order to find common ground. Through the Council's negotiation and mediation process, an agreement was reached and signed by both parties, 10 witnesses, select members of the Council of Notables and a member of CSOI. Key in the final agreement was the provision that if either party disregarded the conditions of the settlement, a substantial fine would be imposed as a penalty.

This example highlights that time must be invested in understanding the root causes of conflict, eliciting conciliatory behaviour and meting out appropriate justice. Often, resolving these conflicts requires an intimate knowledge of tribal customs and practices. The Council also serves as its own informal network – members share information and build upon best practices in peacebuilding. With its dotted line to the CSOI and their networks (including Western peacebuilding scholars and practitioners), the Council also avails itself of new methods by which to approach conflict.

While the Council of Notables has proven its value as a peacebuilding mechanism, obstacles to its work continue. Key among these is a lack of financial resources. The Council's work is driven by volunteers who conduct meetings in homes, mosques or other community spaces. Long hours are dedicated to finding lasting solutions, and the Council members give their professional time freely. There is no financial support for capacity-building, administrative costs, technical support or salaries, or for the traditional 'reconciliation meals' that mark the end of a conflict – sometimes involving hundreds of people.

Kurds celebrating Newroz  
outside Kirkuk, Iraq.



Another obstacle is the underlying political tensions at the national level that polarise communities and can cause an escalation in conflicts at the community level. Lack of peace education and skills for resolving conflict presents another challenge that, going forward, needs to be overcome. Currently, the study of peacebuilding and conflict resolution is not taught in the lower and higher education programmes. At the university level there have been efforts to add peace studies to the curriculum in order to integrate both traditional and Western approaches to peacebuilding and raise awareness about the positive experiences at the community level that can lead to building peace at the national level.

Ultimately, what makes the Council of Notables a workable model for conflict resolution is that it understands that social conflicts are complex situations that cannot be easily reduced to single-dimensional problems and questions. Such conflicts do not necessarily respond well to approaches rooted in scientific methods that call for isolating certain factors while attempting to hold all else constant. This approach offers a more multi-dimensional framework that is sensitive to the local context and its approach to inclusivity. Conflict resolution calls for a cultural, social, economic and political analysis and does not respond to a one-size-fits-all model. There is, however, scope for replicating the approach in other Iraqi governorates – calling upon tribal chiefs, respected community leaders and religious figures to come together and respond in a considered, unified and community-specific approach.

Building peace does not happen in a vacuum, but is affected by social, political, cultural and other dynamics. The work of the Council of Notables is one example of how traditional peacebuilding methods – in a local context – ensure that not only are conflicts resolved but relationships are transformed and community bonds are strengthened in the process – a prerequisite for peaceful co-existence.

*This article is based on an interview with Sameer Abdullah of CSOI and informed by input from Thomas Hill, Clinical Assistant Professor at the Center for Global Affairs at New York University's School of Professional Studies.*

# Women in peace processes – real inclusivity or ‘just add women’?

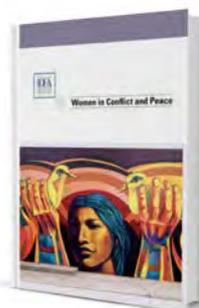
Thiyumi Senarathna

Since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (SCR 1325) on Women, Peace and Security in 2000, and subsequent resolutions (SCR 1820 in 2008 and SCR 1889 in 2009), the inclusion of women has been a priority both for improving outcomes of peace processes and for facilitating women’s rights to participate in political processes in general. However, after 15 years of implementing SCR 1325<sup>1</sup>, considerable evidence points to the continued challenges in this regard. This article highlights the key findings and policy recommendations from International IDEA’s recent publication on the subject of women’s inclusion in peace processes, titled *Women in Conflict and Peace*<sup>2</sup>, coinciding with the 2015 Global Study on SCR 1325.

The Platform for Action adopted at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, in 1995, and SCR 1325 that was adopted five years later, both recognised the need for ‘participation of women at all levels of decision-making, in order to achieve equality, development, and peace’<sup>3</sup> as well as the disproportionate burden borne by women during war and their importance as agents of peace<sup>4</sup>. Although these resolutions, along with several others, have aimed to open up political space for women in peace- and democracy-building processes, the pace of progress has been slow, and the changes these resolutions are meant to implement have also come under criticism<sup>5</sup>. While previously there was little research that could show the implications of gender for peace and security<sup>6</sup>, the amount of available literature on the subject has increased significantly lately in connection with the high-level review of SCR 1325, as well as a series of research programmes commissioned for the Global Study, led by Radhika Coomaraswamy (2015)<sup>7</sup>.

There are several issues with the formulation and implementation of SCR 1325. First, women have been considered too much as a homogeneous group that can be represented as an entity in peace processes. Cultural, ethnic, social and economic divisions, intersecting with gender, result in diversity of experience, aspirations and goals. There is more than the dimension of gender involved in being a representative of women and women’s issues at the negotiating table and in peacebuilding processes. Disregarding other dimensions that intersect with gender, such as poverty and other forms of deprivation, which can marginalise women in certain segments of society, inhibits successful implementation of a resolution that aims at achieving gender equality and political space for all women, not just some.

Second, the formulation of women as ‘agents of peace’ in SCR 1325 has been criticised for treating women in peace processes as mere instruments. Gender mainstreaming and processes that ‘add women’ without proper consideration of the conflict context, or of existing security or political structures, may fail



IDEA's publication *Women in Conflict and Peace*.



Victims of sexual violence who have been successfully reintegrated into their communities assemble in a "peace hut" near Walungu, South Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

to contribute to genuine inclusivity in peace processes. The Global Study points out that the harmful gender stereotypes that are present in cultural and legal structures, faced by women politicians and leaders, cannot be abrogated by the mere presence of women in parliaments or quotas for women<sup>8</sup>.

Furthermore, this treatment does not shift the harmful gender norms that are embedded in institutional structures. Instead, it reinforces them, leading to continuous marginalisation and exclusion. This instrumentalisation of women is not just limited to women's involvement in peace and democratic processes. For instance, the World Bank has promoted participation of women in economic development, as women are recognised as economic actors and guarantors of social stability<sup>9</sup>. Instrumentalising gender equality and inclusivity rhetoric through a liberal agenda can end up being harmful in the long run. If women are seen merely as tools for other ends, rather than gender equality itself being the goal, we run the risk of inclusivity being replaced by other methods for reaching those ends. It is paramount to emphasise, especially during implementation processes that inclusivity of women in peace and democracy processes is a matter of justice and gender equality, not a means to an end.

Third, it is impossible to discuss peace and security without discussing the gender dimension of human security. It is time to recognise that violence and insecurity are part of the daily lives of women in 'peace' situations, not just in narrowly defined periods of war. For instance, many abuses take the form of sexual exploitation and assault by peacekeepers, despite their role in protecting and supporting a fragile peace on the ground<sup>10</sup>. The Global Study also highlights issues regarding sexual exploitation of women and girls committed by peacekeepers, as well as gender-based violence experienced by women and children in post-conflict contexts<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, while rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence are prominent in discussions on women and security – for example, the 'commercialisation of rape' in the DRC where rape became a tool to solicit aid<sup>12</sup> – that focus in itself can sometimes have the effect of deflecting attention from the long-term health consequences of war that can have an even greater impact on women.

It should also be noted that acknowledging sexual violence or rape as a ‘war crime’ can cast sexual violence in conflict as an exceptional form of violence, rather than an ill of inequality that affects the daily lives of women also during peacetime<sup>13</sup>. Incorporating human security in peace and development agendas calls for deeper understanding of the harmful consequences it can produce if it is manipulated for political gain.

This article serves two purposes: presenting the key findings of International IDEA’s study that further underline the above-mentioned obstacles, and providing policy recommendations to overcome them. The hope is also that these recommendations will help further the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those pertaining to SDG 5, which sets out to ‘achieve gender equality and empower all women’ by ensuring ‘women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life’, and to SDG 16 promoting ‘peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, with the provision of access to justice for all and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels’<sup>14</sup>.

## **Key findings in International IDEA’s publication *Women in Conflict and Peace***

International IDEA’s research, based on four case studies undertaken in the Philippines, Myanmar, Rwanda and Afghanistan, shows that women are not just passive victims in conflict. Rather, they are agents with a capacity to be catalysts for peace as well as perpetrators of violence. Women’s role as stakeholders in peace and conflict is, thus, much more complex and nuanced than portrayed by existing stereotypes. Indeed, despite the diverse conflict contexts, the study identifies several common themes and key findings across the four countries, on the basis of which it makes recommendations to both international actors and local practitioners involved in facilitating marginalised women’s participation in peace- and democracy-building, conflict resolution, and conflict-prevention processes.

One of the most significant findings from this study is the heterogeneous nature of women’s resistance to violence and conflict as well as their contributions to peace processes. In Afghanistan, women are involved as teachers in Taliban-outlawed schools; Hutu women were reported hiding and protecting Tutsis during the Rwandan genocide; and in Myanmar, ethnic Kachin women were observed joining forces with Bamar women in informal peacebuilding networks to end the conflict. The study also provides empirical evidence of women’s involvement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities outside of formal peace processes<sup>15</sup>. Peace processes taking place in formal settings do not necessarily recognise or reflect conflict-resolution and peacebuilding that take place at the community level, that create conditions contributing to those processes unfolding at the national and supranational levels. For instance, in Afghanistan, women appear to be involved in inter- and intra-family and

community conflict resolution, while in the Philippines, female community leaders adopt an active role in resolving *rido* (inter-clan violence), which can have a considerable impact on the safety of women and the security of the community. These examples underscore the need to recognise informal contributions to peace processes, which increase the amount of ‘political spaces’ for women’s participation in such processes, and the important role of informal peace networks in bridging ethnic and religious cleavages.

However, there is a danger of gender-role stereotyping when recognising women’s contributions to peace processes and their roles as peacemakers. The study highlights empirical examples from Rwanda, Afghanistan and the Philippines, where associations were made between women, motherhood and peace to legitimise women’s demands for inclusion in conflict-resolution mechanisms at the local and national levels<sup>16</sup>. In post-conflict democratic structures there are also perils in replicating and reinforcing norms and hierarchies already entrenched in cronyism, corruption and gender-role stereotypes. For instance, in Myanmar, Afghanistan and the Philippines, women’s political participation is the lowest in South and South-East Asia, where democratic institutions have been adapted to fit the existing political structures, favouring political representatives based on their wealth, clan, religious and political affiliation or ethnicity. These discouraging examples tell us two things: that the ‘just add women’ formula prescribed in the name of inclusivity in peace- and democracy-building processes is not automatically a panacea, ensuring women’s participation by tackling the gender deficiencies of political and institutional structures; and that it is imperative to address harmful gendered norms such as masculine hierarchies, which appear to be entrenched in many peace-negotiation processes.





Furthermore, the International IDEA study examines women's motives for participating in armed struggles, noting that these can vary from perceived grievances – such as their own experiences of poverty, marginalisation and discrimination – to ideology, necessity or coercion. Accounts by women who became perpetrators motivated by ethnic hatreds during the Rwandan genocide indicate that their participation was voluntary. In the case of Myanmar, some of the women's participation was due to necessity – the lack of male participants – among various other complex motivations. In both Afghanistan and Myanmar's Kachin state, women's motivations were tied to nationalistic rhetoric: in the case of Afghanistan, as part of a widely adopted movement against the Soviet invaders, and in the Kachin State, as a struggle against the Bamar-dominated government. Furthermore, in the case of the Kachin people in Myanmar and the Moro in the Philippines, the denial of human rights, inadequate access to basic services, and a lack of voice in decision-making or policy-making processes, motivated women's contributions to armed struggle<sup>17</sup>.

Another key factor in encouraging women's long-term involvement in various conflicts is the absence of security for women and their families. Ensuring women's security is not only important from a human rights perspective, it is also paramount in ensuring sustainable and meaningful participation of women in peace processes. The case studies show that women's experiences of insecurity before, during and after conflict differ considerably from those of men, due to gendered socio-economic and structural violence and inequalities. The shape and form of these insecurities vary from, for example, sexual or gender-based violence inflicted by government forces on marginalised women in Myanmar, to the denial of women's human rights, including access to education under the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. This wide spectrum of insecurities experienced by women undermines their participation in peace processes; in the case of Afghanistan, a strong correlation was shown between insecurities experienced by women and their involvement in decision-making processes<sup>18</sup>.

## Recommendations for international actors

The International IDEA study makes several recommendations concerning women in peacebuilding and democratic reform processes<sup>19</sup>, including:

**Utilise existing structures for conflict resolution.** Informal peacebuilding and conflict-resolution mechanisms that already exist on the ground should be used as entry points in accessing marginalised groups, including women, to facilitate inclusive peace processes. These structures must be understood to evolve incrementally.

**Support locally led multi-ethnic women's movements for peace and conflict resolution,** in order to strengthen their capacity to influence policies and interventions. This will in return increase the inclusion of women across religious, ethnic and other intersectional dimensions and divides.

**Protect and include women peacebuilders,** thus allowing them to continue to work towards sustainable peace and democracy.

Filipino Muslim rally near the presidential palace as a peace pact is signed.



**Develop post-election support for women,** a crucial step in building more permanent roles for women within democracy-reform processes, as well as within their communities during post-reform processes. This helps to expand the focus on the inclusion of women beyond the initial planning and implementation phases to systematic institutional inclusion, where changes of the system can occur more organically than imposed. For instance, in Rwanda a sustainable integration of women into formal peacebuilding and democratic processes took place, as opposed to tokenistic efforts in Afghanistan, Myanmar and the Philippines.

Apart from these specific recommendations targeting the inclusion of women in peacebuilding and democratic reform processes, the study also makes other related recommendations aimed at ensuring the sustainability and continuity of peace processes<sup>20</sup>. These include:

**Include women's security needs in discussions on reform and development.** Peace and reform processes should take into account women's security issues and perceived security needs, affecting them both as individuals as well as members of marginalised communities. Attention should also be paid to how to implement this without perpetuating harmful gender norms or structures causing further marginalisation of women as well as other vulnerable groups.

**Utilise the status of women's human rights as a mark of progress toward peace and democracy.** Reform and policy initiatives should include gender-equality indicators to assess successes beyond aggregated numbers and quantitative indicators alone, such as the realisation of women's human rights. Other indicators such as social and rank mobility available to women who join formal peacebuilding and statebuilding processes should also be included in gauging progress of women's engagement in peace and democracy.

**Analyse the effect of international interventions and reform initiatives on women from different ethnic, religious and class backgrounds.**

If the focus is solely on gender differences, complexities that are brought about as a result of inequalities from multiple identities get ignored. Unless these intersectionalities are recognised and addressed accordingly, outcomes will be distorted and flawed. For instance, women from marginalised communities occupy less political space in comparison to women who are from the majority (Kachin and Christians in Myanmar, Muslims in the Philippines). Otherwise, the results become symbolic achievements that are limited to and enjoyed only by a few segments of society.

Inclusion of women in peace processes, as discussed above, is a complex matter with many dimensions, and is a crucial component in establishing gender equality. Changing the discourse from women as victims to women as stakeholders in the process of sustaining peace and security requires an agenda encompassing all the nuances and complexities of including women from global to local level, and from design through implementation, monitoring and evaluation, using gender relevant indicators.

All these will contribute to the meaningful including women, encouraging inclusive and peaceful societies based on equality and adherence to human rights. The review of UNSCR1325 and the response by the UN, as well as International IDEA's contributions to the discourse on women, peace and security, can help achieve these goals.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The key components and recommendations of SCR 1325 are: preventing sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict; including gender perspectives in peace negotiations; and increasing women's participation in peace negotiations with attention to supporting local peace initiatives, protection of women and girls in refugee settings. Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) calls for consideration of gender, increase in women's political participation, incorporating gender perspectives in peacekeeping operations etc. (S/RES/1325 (2000))
- <sup>2</sup> *Women in Conflict and Peace* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2015), available at [www.idea.int/publications/women-in-conflict-and-peace/index.cfm](http://www.idea.int/publications/women-in-conflict-and-peace/index.cfm)
- <sup>3</sup> UN DOC/A/CONF.177/22, 1995.
- <sup>4</sup> S/RES/1325, 2000, available at [www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?docid=3b00f4672e](http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?docid=3b00f4672e)
- <sup>5</sup> 'Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace – A Global Study on the implementation of UNSC resolution 1325', available at [www.wps.unwomen.org/~media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf](http://www.wps.unwomen.org/~media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf); Sanam Anderlini, 'What the Women Say: Participation and UNSCR 1325', MIT Center for International Studies, International Civil Society Action Network, 2010, [web.mit.edu/cis/pdf/WomenReport\\_10\\_2010.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/cis/pdf/WomenReport_10_2010.pdf), accessed 01 October 2015; Kara Ellerby, '(En)gendered Security? The Complexities of Women's Inclusion in Peace Processes', *International Interactions* 39/4, 2013; S/RES/2122, 2013.
- <sup>6</sup> See, for example, Valerie M. Hudson, Mary Caprioli, Bonnie Ballif-Spanvill, Rose McDermott, and Chad F. Emmett, 'The Heart of the Matter: The Security of Women and the Security of States', *International Security* 33/3 (Winter 2008/09).
- <sup>7</sup> For more on the High-level Review see [www.wps.unwomen.org/en/global-study](http://www.wps.unwomen.org/en/global-study); 'Peacebuilding in the aftermath of conflict', report of the Secretary General; A/67/499-S/2012/746, [www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/SG%20report%20PB%202012.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/SG%20report%20PB%202012.pdf)
- <sup>8</sup> 'Preventing Conflict', 175
- <sup>9</sup> 'Enhancing Women's Participation in Economic Development' A World Bank Policy Paper, (Washington D.C., 1994), 22-27
- <sup>10</sup> P. Higate, 'Peacekeepers, Masculinities, and Sexual Exploitation', *Men and Masculinities* 10/1, 2007.
- <sup>11</sup> 'Preventing Conflict', 17, 25, 146-150
- <sup>12</sup> Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern, 'The Complexity of Violence: A Critical Analysis of Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)', Sida Working Paper on Gender Based Violence, (Stockholm: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, 2010).
- <sup>13</sup> True, J, *The Political Economy of Violence Against Women*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- <sup>14</sup> For more information see: [www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300](http://www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300)
- <sup>15</sup> *Women in Conflict and Peace*, 161
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 162
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 156-157
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 159-160
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 162-163
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 160



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# Creative peacebuilding for Timor-Leste's youth, women and children

Sierra James

Imagine a post-conflict country where all people, from young people to local elders and government officials (regardless of their gender), have the skills to de-escalate conflict situations, engage effectively in violence prevention and inform the process of peacebuilding at the national level. That is our vision for Timor-Leste.

Conflicts inevitably arise between people, within and between communities, as well as at the national and international level, and these conflicts tend to interrelate and easily escalate, particularly in a post-conflict environment. Issues that arise at one level trigger problems at the other levels. Thus, inclusive peacebuilding, meaningfully involving stakeholders at all levels, is imperative to sustaining peace. Involving national government in peacebuilding is not enough; all people, especially those living in post-conflict or fragile states, should have the opportunity to develop peacebuilding skills that allow them to effectively understand and engage in creating a positive, productive and peaceful future for their country.

Ba Futuru photography class students.





In a country such as Timor-Leste, where violence has become entrenched due to a history of repeated cycles of conflict, inclusive peacebuilding is essential. The violence perpetrated on individuals and communities during the Indonesian occupation by the Indonesian military and the local militia, which the military forcibly built up over the 24-year occupation, divided not only the society but also families, and left scars on people's psyches. Violence was effectively normalised. After independence, internal conflict re-emerged in 2006, resulting in further instability, mass displacement, and a breakdown of law and order. Since that time, many young people have become directly involved in violence in their communities.

Today, violence is still readily used in homes, schools and communities to resolve simple disputes as they arise. Violence is also applied as a disciplinary tool against women and children. The propensity for violence at these levels, if unaddressed, indicates vulnerability to relapse into larger-scale conflict in the country, particularly in response to triggers like elections or an increase in the disenfranchisement of young people due to lack of employment and other opportunities.

After coming to Timor-Leste in 2004, and seeing people of all ages and in all walks of life readily resorting to the use of violence to solve problems, I helped to found Ba Futuru (meaning *for the future*). My aim was to work with local colleagues to develop people's interpersonal conflict prevention skills with a vision of creating a Timor-Leste free of violence, where all citizens (especially women, children and young people) can engage meaningfully in the country's development. Ba Futuru is a national civil society organisation that uses innovative approaches and programming tailored to local needs to engage in peacebuilding across the whole of society, with the goal of reducing violence, empowering women and youth, and inspiring young learners.

## Using innovative approaches to peacebuilding

### *Participatory training in arts, film and sport*

Ba Futuru has utilised creative approaches, including art, photography, film, community theatre and sport to engage people in peacebuilding, to spread essential conflict prevention knowledge, to help people overcome their experiences of violence and to bring about behavioural change.

In the Timorese cultural context, creative therapeutic techniques are a more accessible and less threatening means of exploring issues than verbal mediums. Artistic expression is a useful tool for those who have difficulty putting words on their feelings and experiences. Self-expression through drawing, painting, music and movement help to provide emotional catharsis and also impart skills that can guide people who are living in difficult circumstances with positive models of behaviour. Creative techniques provide an avenue for people to vent and express negative emotions, allowing for personal transformation, and taking a crucial step towards building lasting peace. Moreover, artistic festivals, small community arts events, photography exhibitions, and film festivals are all great ways to get women, children and youth focused on the issues.

Art, film, theatre and music can also be effectively utilised to transmit conflict-prevention messages. One approach that we have seen work very well in Timor-Leste is the creation of an innovative film series called *Feto Fantástiku ba Dame* (Fantastic Female Peacebuilder), which follows a female super hero who works to spread peace. *Feto Fantástiku* shows up in situations of escalating conflict and teaches basic conflict-resolution skills to help the involved parties solve problems together. This film series is shown on national television, as well as on YouTube, and thus reaches a large segment of the population. So far, we have made six short films as part of this series, focusing on issues such as youth conflict and domestic violence.

This film series challenges the general public to become agents of peace and helps equip Timorese people with the practical knowledge and skills to solve problems non-violently, using creative and peaceful solutions. It also provides them with important information on where they can get assistance if they or their loved ones are victims of violence or abuse. As a female super-hero, *Feto Fantástiku* encourages and inspires women to take an empowered role in their families and communities, which is important in a country dominated by a patriarchal structure.

Super-hero  
Feto Fantástiku



## Peacebuilding with at-risk youth

Young people under 24 years old comprise 62 per cent of the population of Timor-Leste<sup>1</sup> and play a critical role in shaping the country's future. Young people are key to ensuring stability and have the potential to contribute positively to their communities, but they are also often perpetrators of violence and the ones that can and do destabilise society.

The fallout of the 2006 civil and political crisis in Timor-Leste left a security gap with a disbanded police force. Youth gangs increased in number and young people became the main perpetrators of violence at the community level. In 2010, it was estimated that Timor-Leste's 15 main gangs had an estimated membership of around 90,000, out of a population of just 1.2 million<sup>2</sup>. Between 2006 and 2015, Ba Futuru worked with more than 17,000 young people, providing conflict resolution and peacebuilding skills through various youth empowerment and education initiatives. Ba Futuru's youth empowerment projects use participatory training workshops to teach young people about conflict resolution, conflict analysis, and peacebuilding in their communities. In recent years civic education and gender-based violence prevention have been added to this training programme in order to increase understanding and to further empower youth to engage more comprehensively in conflict prevention.

After their initial training, some young people became so passionate about peacebuilding that they wanted to join the Ba Futuru team. In 2009, in order to reach youth embedded in gang life, we began engaging these youth, who themselves had gang backgrounds, as outreach officers. They were grouped into Community Response Teams for their respective communities and assisted in getting the most violence-prone young people to participate in our training programmes. This method worked extremely well and helped empower youth to transform gang members into peace advocates.

Innovative approaches such as this have meant that Ba Futuru has been remarkably successful in shifting the thinking and behaviour of many at-risk young people. After participating in one of Ba Futuru's trainings, an elected youth leader reported:

The training... has totally changed my behaviour. Before, I was a person who was always involved in fighting and nobody could stop me. I am very social and like making friends, so I often invite youth around to my house to drink palm wine. When we got drunk, people often tried to fight each other and in the past I would have fought anyone and made the problem worse. Now I understand that this kind of behaviour is not good and I tell people who are fighting that it is better for them to go home and sleep.

### *From gang member to peacebuilder – Atoy's story*

Atoy has overcome a violent and insecure past and is now working to promote peace.

Atoy faced difficulties growing up in Dili, the capital city of Timor-Leste, during the Indonesian occupation and the blood-stained struggle for independence that followed. Like many youth at the time, he faced constant insecurity due to the violence carried out in his community by the Indonesian military and the militia. He was first put in jail at age 15, but eventually managed to finish high school.

When he was 22 years old, Atoy was recognised by local leaders as an influential young person in his community and they recommended that he participate in a training on conflict resolution, child protection and human rights with Ba Futuru.



Inspired by Ba Futuru's facilitators, Atoy suggested that they bring their training to his community. It was not hard for Atoy to convince his friends to attend Ba Futuru's training. 'Like them, I had been involved in gangs and violence in the past. They saw how I had moved on from that and adapted to a new environment, and underneath they knew they wanted to escape from the violence as well.'

'Everything suddenly became clear during the training,' he says smiling. 'The training helped us to understand many things that had happened in the past.'

Eventually, Atoy was employed as a member of Ba Futuru's Community Response Team, and moved into the role of facilitator for conflict-resolution training and art education. Now he also acts as the lead male role model in the *Feto Fantsatiku* film series.



Play during a peace festival about women's right to vote.

In 2012, following the prior peacebuilding success with at-risk youth, Ba Futuru took the Peace Promotion Project a step further. In addition to lessons in peace advocacy, youth were provided with training in art, photography, reporting, drama and job-finding skills over a five-month period. They then became members of peace promotion teams. This more intensive long-term youth engagement programme was an opportunity to ensure a more thorough transformation of individuals' mindsets and behaviours.

After the first few months of intensive courses, the youth were ready for implementation and created Peace Festivals where they could showcase some of their new skills in their home

communities, as well as share important information on a range of conflict-prevention and human rights issues. As part of this initiative, 20 Peace Festivals were held over a one-year period. Each included an exhibition with anti-violence art and multimedia work, as well as drama, dance and music performances by the peace promotion team members.

**Santiago**, one of the youth involved in the Peace Promotion Project, reported that the training helped him to change his life: 'Before I came to study at Ba Futuru Peace Center, I did not know anything, because I was a troublemaker and I liked throwing rocks at people's houses and provoking people.'

While growing up in Dili, Santiago faced a number of disadvantages. Threatened by martial arts groups operating in his community, he had to drop out of formal education during his first year of secondary school. Without having completed his schooling, he remained unemployed until 2014.

Santiago believes that Ba Futuru's programme has changed his life in many ways, including by helping him to build his confidence and to develop a more positive attitude. Despite his disadvantaged background, Santiago now has a stable job. 'I have a job because of the specific training I did at Ba Futuru Peace Center. Since attending the training, I have helped to solve a conflict in my family and I also try to encourage other youth to stay away from violence because it has no value for our lives and it will destroy our future.'

The combination of intensive training and practical experience greatly changed the lives of these youth. They acquired the confidence and skills to create a positive future for themselves and their communities, despite their at-risk backgrounds. In follow-up surveys, more than half of the youth reported that they are now either enrolled at university or have a job.

Ba Futuru found this model of engagement to be extremely successful and is confident it could be effectively replicated in other post-conflict contexts.

## Empowering women for peacebuilding and protection

Successful peacebuilding also requires the social and economic empowerment of women. Ba Futuru has worked to promote female leaders as agents of protection and conflict prevention by building their skills in conflict resolution, leadership and decision-making so they are able to make a meaningful contribution to the nation's development.

Timorese women and girls are disproportionately affected by widespread poverty and many live under constant risk of domestic violence – indeed 29 per cent have experienced physical violence in the past 12 months<sup>3</sup>. Traditionally, men wield the power and expect women to obey. Exacerbating these disempowering circumstances are an extremely high fertility rate (5.32 children)<sup>4</sup> and limited access to basic services such as clean water, healthcare, education and transportation, which increases the burden on women.

Although each village council includes three women, they typically lack the skills to participate effectively in local governance and decision-making<sup>5</sup>. While 38 per cent of parliamentarians are women, they are inadequately linked to their constituencies and need support to better understand the priorities of women and girls<sup>6</sup>.

In 2015, Ba Futuru worked with the Asia Foundation to conduct four conflict-mitigation training courses for women leaders. This followed a three-year Empowering Women and Establishing Grassroots Protection Networks project (EWP), which placed a special focus on empowering female elected leaders at the grassroots level. These women were offered training in protection, empowerment and conflict transformation and given special roles in the Protection Teams established in target areas. Drawing on their leadership roles, they address local protection issues on behalf of their communities. The case study below illustrates some of the successes of the EWP.



Bu Futuru training for the police on conflict resolution and how to stop gender-based violence.

### *Justina: From victim to survivor to leader*

Justina<sup>7</sup>, a mother of six children, was attacked with a machete by her husband and very badly beaten. Yet the police who attended the scene of the crime made no attempt to arrest him. Remembering that night, she explains, ‘When my husband was beating me, I ran as fast as I could to my *chefe aldeia*’s [sub-village chief’s] house to find safety. I went to her house because I had heard from my neighbours that she also has a role in supporting vulnerable women.’

Her *chefe aldeia* is the coordinator of their community’s protection team, built by Ba Futuru’s EWP programme. She and another Protection Team Member (PTM) brought Justina to the hospital where she received life-saving medical assistance. They also explained that she had the option to press charges against her husband, supported her in filing a case with the correct police unit (the vulnerable persons unit), and helped her obtain emergency financial assistance from the government, which she later used to start a micro-business.

Justina says that the support from the PTMs was critical in helping her to understand how the formal justice system works and to gain the courage needed to pursue her case. She felt inspired to start attending monthly Protection Team meetings, and then asked to receive training to become a PTM herself. She said that the EWP training programmes have made a huge difference in her life and household, which is now much more peaceful. ‘I used to hit my kids when I was angry with them, and also yell at them with curses. I don’t do that any more because of what I learned from the training.’ Justina also says that she keeps an eye out for women in her neighbourhood and in her extended family who show signs of experiencing violence or abuse, and then goes to talk with them privately. ‘Sometimes they just need someone to talk to,’ she says, ‘but we Protection Team Members truly believe in taking cases of domestic violence to the courts. Violence is wrong. There is punishment for it, and it’s against the law.’

Today, Justina’s micro-business provides a steady income that allows her to pay for her children’s schooling and to be more independent. Her husband was eventually found guilty by the court, which not only helped Justina find closure, because she feels justice has been done, but has also helped to decrease impunity for abusers and change the attitudes of both women and men. Justina is now an outspoken advocate for women, girls and boys in her local community.

Over the course of the EWP program, a total of 65 women and girls were supported by their protection teams to file charges against their abusers and to access the support they need to rebuild their lives, in the form of referrals to service providers for free legal assistance, safe houses, psychological care and financial support<sup>8</sup>.

In addition to empowering local female leaders to become key agents of peace and protection, the EWP also improved the government's awareness of grassroots protection needs by delivering policy recommendations based on the gaps identified by PTMs in the protection and violence response systems at the local level. The meaningful involvement of women in both peace promotion and systems strengthening will help to create stability in the country in the longer term.

## Involving children in peacebuilding initiatives

Ba Futuru's approach to inclusive peacebuilding involves equipping children with knowledge and skills to protect themselves from violence and abuse. The organisation works with children to educate others on the importance of violence prevention and child rights. Moreover, it recognises that it is essential to create long-term stability by working with those who have an impact on the lives of children – including educators, parents, police, civil society actors, traditional leaders and elected community leaders – and providing them with the knowledge and skills to implement community-based protection, to access the formal justice system and to understand the negative impacts of violence and physical punishment.

Around international Children's Day in 2008, Ba Futuru ran a campaign to get children to trade in their toy weapons in exchange for educational materials. The photo on the next page shows Domingus, one of the kids from our Peace Centre, handing over his homemade sling, together with Ba Futuru's Peace Building project coordinator, Vidal Campos Magno, and the prime minister of Timor-Leste at that time, 'Xanana' Kay Rala Gusmão.

Since the heated conflict in the streets has now for the most part abated, Ba Futuru's work with children has shifted to become more focused on violence prevention in homes and schools. This assists in breaking the cycle of violence, thereby decreasing the likelihood of young people turning to violence and hence preventing wider-scale national conflict in the long run.

Children at a peace festival.





Domingus, Vidal and  
President Xanana at  
Children's Day.

## Reducing violence by working with key local and national actors

Ba Futuru works to prevent violence against children, women and vulnerable people through outreach and education. We undertake advocacy and encourage dialogue among key players at local, municipal and national levels. Our work contributes to strengthening laws, networks and protection systems (including government policies and procedures regarding law enforcement, judicial systems and protection response mechanisms). We help to ensure that when violations of human or child rights occur, responses are effective and justice ensues. In the short and long run, this will help to mitigate conflict escalation and guard against the outbreak of larger-scale conflict in the country.

Ba Futuru is undertaking a three-year project called the Consolidating Peace and Democracy Initiative, which enhances conflict mitigation skills among those tasked by the government with conflict prevention at national, regional and village levels. The project includes 30 training courses over a three-year period in high-risk areas as identified by our partner in the project, the National Directorate for Prevention of Community Conflict (DNPCK) under the Ministry of the Interior. DNPCK staff representatives are gaining skills as peacebuilding trainers through participating in a training of trainers (ToT) programme and working alongside experienced Ba Futuru facilitators over a period of three years. In this way the project will build a cohort of government conflict prevention and civic education facilitators that can continue to transfer skills in these areas to others across the country over the long run. Thus, the project is helping to close the governance gap by bringing skills, knowledge and high-quality publications to key national, regional and local actors to use in performing their government-mandated conflict prevention roles.

The project works to create important linkages between national government, local youth, women and elected leaders, promoting ownership of peace processes in their communities. It provides tools for people at the local level to resolve their own conflicts and to mitigate conflict escalation and violence that has the potential to lead to larger conflict and engagement in civil unrest.

One of the components of the project is a youth forum that will bring together youth from various parts of the country and allow them to engage in a two-day PeaceJam conference, a platform through which they will be able to synthesise and share ideas on issues related to creating a more sustainable peace in the country. Nobel Laureate and former President of Timor-Leste, Jose Ramos-Horta, will be present at the conference, and other national leaders will be presented with the outcomes of the conference through the media. This will help provide an opportunity to explore the synergy and possible disconnect between national-level peacebuilding priorities and those at the local level.



A young student in Ba Futuru's after school program.

## Conclusion

Providing opportunities for involvement in peacebuilding, and gaining knowledge about practical conflict resolution skills that can be applied at the personal and community levels can go a long way towards increasing ownership in the peacebuilding process. Moreover, utilising innovative approaches to engage youth, women and children can encourage their meaningful participation in conflict-prevention initiatives, which in turn helps them to support and inform national-level processes for peacebuilding.

Projects that make linkages from the local level to the national level, like Ba Futuru's Empowering Women and Establishing Grassroots Protection Networks, are critical for inclusive peacebuilding. Bringing the voices of local players to parliament and policy debates, and allowing them to share their concerns and information about gaps in systems that are being developed, is extremely beneficial. These types of initiatives can help high-level government officials, who are often the ones who have the most say in national peacebuilding processes, to be adequately informed about the needs and opinions of those who are most impacted by their decisions – and thus make sustainable peace more viable.

We have also found that in Timor-Leste, the capacity development of local actors, who are essential in maintaining stability, is at times not sufficiently prioritised. When addressing peacebuilding needs it is important not just to help build systems and structures that strengthen stability and peace, but also to build the human resources for these to function adequately. This is especially the case in a country like Timor-Leste where education levels and the capacity of local actors tasked with conflict prevention is fairly minimal. Building the conflict prevention skills and knowledge of local leaders, youth, women and children is imperative to enable local ownership in the peacebuilding process. These efforts catalyse the transformation that is required to mitigate future violent conflict and to sustain peace.

<sup>1</sup> 'Timor-Leste Demographics Profile 2014', Index Mundi, accessed 16 September 2015, [www.indexmundi.com/timor-leste/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/timor-leste/demographics_profile.html).

<sup>2</sup> Rory Collinan, 'Mean Streets', *The Australian*, 19 April 2010.

<sup>3</sup> 2009-2010 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) of Timor-Leste.

<sup>4</sup> 'Fertility Rate; Total Births per Woman in Timor-Leste (2012)', accessed 4 April 2013, [www.tradingeconomics.com/timor-leste/fertility-rate-total-births-per-woman-wb-data.html](http://www.tradingeconomics.com/timor-leste/fertility-rate-total-births-per-woman-wb-data.html).

<sup>5</sup> 'Policy Recommendations to Strengthen Protection for Women and Children in Timor-Leste' Vols. 2 & 3 [October 2013; October 2014], Ba Futuru.

<sup>6</sup> Based on Ba Futuru's work with the *Grupo Mulheres de Parlamentár Nacional do Timor-Leste* (Group of Women Parliamentarians), 2012-2014.

<sup>7</sup> Name has been changed for confidentiality purposes.

<sup>8</sup> Emily Stallman, 'Her Story', excerpt from Ba Futuru 2014 Annual Report.

## Notes



Youth navigation as part of Ba Futuru's International Youth Award program.



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# Africa's youth – an underutilised resource in peacebuilding

**Herbert Bangura**

Africa is a wealthy continent that is said to be 'blessed' with plentiful resources, both natural and human, but bad governance and corruption result in unequal distribution of wealth among the population, manifesting as poverty and seriously affecting Africa's development. Half of its people, especially youth, live in abject poverty, a condition that keeps Africa's youth craving for ways to attain better lives. The search for prosperity has led some of Africa's youth to become active players in extremist activities in various countries, including Nigeria (Boko Haram) and Somalia (Al-shabab) as well as voluntarily enlisting in groups like IS (Islamic State, also known as ISIS).

The youth recognise that poverty, as a result of bad governance, denies them the opportunity to be active participants in determining the future of their people. They understand that young people's marginalisation and voicelessness stem from their inability to meet their essential needs socially and economically, and that they have not been able to enjoy proper representation and participation in decision-making processes. Most African governments, including that of Sierra Leone, maintain that they have put in place the necessary policies to facilitate youth development after having initiated a youth programme or two to promote youth participation. In 2006, Heads of States endorsed the African Youth Charter, a political and legal document that serves as the strategic framework for African states, gives direction for youth empowerment and development at continental, regional and national levels. The impact of the Charter has, however, been disappointing.

While there may be some of these skeleton structures in place, in reality, youth has very little decision-making power or influence in these processes, and ironically, the structures to support youth are not manned by youth. For example, the Ministries of Youth in almost all sub-Saharan African countries, including Sierra Leone, have no young people serving as ministers, nor are they seen playing very active roles in the hierarchy. On graduating from universities or other tertiary institutions young Africans often find that there are few or no opportunities available to them.

Burdened with political, social and economic challenges, African youth from indigenous, rural and under-served communities are subject to extreme marginalisation. The Human Rights Commission states that the promotion and protection of the rights of national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities are key to the advancement of socio-political stability and cultural diversity. However, very little or nothing is being done by governments to ensure the realisation of these rights. Furthermore, most youth have little confidence in the judicial systems of their countries, having seen that governments get away with doing anything they like as long as they are in power. This is a very serious concern because when people lose faith in their authorities to govern justly, then the foundation for future violent conflicts is laid.

Volatile political systems have made it tremendously difficult to de-escalate violent conflicts in many countries once they start. In most African countries, democratic principles of governance are dysfunctional and sometimes even absent. Most African countries are also home to a diverse set of people belonging to different ethnic groups. The tendency of one ethnic group to dominate every facet of life in the country breeds discontent among others groups. In politics, for example, some dominant families operate like dynasties, with positions of leadership handed from parents to children. This fuels frustration that can be exploited by opponents engaging in political power struggles.

Looking at the harsh realities in our societies today, it is hard to reconcile the bid for third terms in office by African presidents in, for example, Burundi, Uganda, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. The change of constitutions to suit one political party's interests to the detriment of the masses, either because that party wants to stay in power or the sitting president wants to hand-pick his successor, continues to impose great suffering on the people. Youth and young peace builders are continuously calling attention to these and many other issues despite the risks associated with doing so, engaging with the public via different media, hosting consultations with communities and meeting with representatives from the international community, including the UN. However, it seems that young people matter to their leaders only when it is time for elections or during violent conflicts.

Youth possess a lot of energy and willingness to participate actively in development processes and peacebuilding, but in most instances they are denied the opportunity to express themselves. This was evident during the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) that claimed the lives of thousands of families in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone, leaving many children orphaned. During the EVD crisis, it was the youth who suffered the most but also who volunteered the most. Despite the challenges they had to face they were ready and willing to render their services in order to save lives.

Young Peace Builders  
engaging the media.





In all of the three affected countries, youth were seen voluntarily enlisting as members of local burial teams, assisting in hospitals and tracing possible contacts, with no protection, no proper education about the disease, and no financial gains. Many died as a result. The EVD outbreak was a serious security threat and people were at war with each other and their communities. The quick response by UN institutions and other international organisations was crucial, but EVD would not have been curbed if the youth had not been willing and ready to volunteer their services.

Sierra Leone is a country that is divided along tribal and regional lines, evident within the political setup in the country. Today it is relatively peaceful, but there are risks that could lead to a re-escalation of conflict, especially during elections. Sierra Leone recently experienced a constitutional crisis. After the vice-president, Samuel (Sam) Sumana, was relieved of his position by the president, Ernest Bai Koroma, groups of people, including the leading opposition party, the Sierra Leone People's Party, challenged the president's authority to single-handedly dismiss the vice-president and requested that he use the correct parliamentary channels, stating that otherwise they would call for a national demonstration against the president's decision. Immediately, the government department responsible for national security issued a press release warning that anyone caught in any public gathering would be dealt with according to the laws under the public state of emergency.

Youth Volunteers train to use personal protective equipments during the fight against Ebola.

Here again one could see the invaluable role that young people played by calling for calm through different social and print media (Facebook, whatsapp, twitter, online news media, local radio stations and local newspapers). Without their efforts the country could have been plunged into serious unrest, considering the highly charged political atmosphere.

Young people possess so much zest and desire to contribute to society, which can be positively utilised to build peace, combat extremism and promote community development, especially with the use of new technology. For example, most youth in Sierra Leone, even in remote villages, have access to mobile phones. With some training, young people could use these mobile phones to promote peace and development in their communities. Increasing access to computers and promoting IT literacy is equally important. Most young people want to be active on social media, for instance on Facebook. Unfortunately, through the Internet they are exposed to a range of – often negative – influences, which can whet their appetite for change and cause them to make dangerous choices, all in the process of seeking better living conditions for themselves and their families.



‘The world now has the largest generation of young people in history. I place great hopes in their power to shape our future,’ said UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in a speech in June 2015. The UN Secretary-General has demonstrated his commitment to the development of youth leadership by establishing a youth envoy in his office, clearly sending a message to world leaders. U.S. President Barack Obama launched a Young African Leaders Initiative that has had a positive impact and continues to create a platform for the exposure and development of the continent’s youth. These initiatives are geared towards creating opportunities, promoting cross-cultural exchange, learning and networking and ultimately to keeping youth positively engaged in peacebuilding and developmental processes.

Young Peace Builders (YPB) represents a similar effort. An organisation made up of youth from various countries in West Africa that have been affected by conflict, YPB deals with post-conflict issues including restoration of ethnic cohesion, reintegration, reconciliation, and structural reforms in democracy and leadership, in an attempt to lay a foundation that will prevent future violence. The organisation brings together people with a shared history and desire to use non-violent means to transform history into a peaceful and prosperous present and future. As a young peace builder and an ardent youth activist who has experienced the bitterness of war, I understand the passion youth feel for playing an active role in building peace in our communities. I am hopeful that the UN and the international community will do more going forward to recognise and harness the potential of youth to contribute to resolving and preventing violent conflicts, as well as to facilitate and promote their inclusion in peacebuilding discourse at the policy level.

**Herbert Bangura** is a youth and human rights activist, accomplished vocalist and peacebuilder from an economically challenged background, who has experienced war in Sierra Leone and Liberia. He lived almost all of his childhood and part of his youth as a refugee. Convinced about the need to stand up for the rights of people in especially deprived communities and to promote peace, Bangura founded and serves as the Executive Director of Young Peace Builders (YPB), an organisation committed to creating a supportive environment for the survival and development of communities and putting youth at the helm of every peacebuilding and community development project. Bangura’s experiences and professional background have shaped his career path, maintaining a focus on policy and design of peacebuilding and development programmes with a passion to apply pragmatic and creative development solutions to complex human challenges.



# Civil society and peacebuilding

Thania Paffenholz

Civil society organisations are present at all levels of contemporary peacebuilding. The international community has devoted substantial efforts towards building and strengthening the capacities of civil society actors, and harnessing their potential as peace actors. However, little systematic evidence-based research exists to provide policy-makers and practitioners with better knowledge about whether, how, when, and under what circumstances civil society can fulfil a peace-supporting role. This article is structured around three main questions: *Who* makes up civil society? *What* can civil society actors contribute to peacebuilding? And *how* best can civil society be involved in peacebuilding?

The first section defines civil society and describes the range of actors and organisations that fit under the civil society umbrella. The second summarises the function-oriented approach to civil society developed by Paffenholz and Spurk<sup>1</sup>, which describes the various roles civil society actors can play in peacebuilding. The third section outlines Paffenholz's modalities framework and relates the previously described civil society functions to each of the modalities. This framework facilitates the analysis of peace processes and political transitions by schematising the ways in which civil society and other actors can be included.

## Who makes up civil society?

Civil society is generally understood as the arena of voluntary, collective actions of an institutional nature around shared interests, purposes, and values that are distinct from those of the state, family, and market. Civil society consists of a large and diverse set of voluntary organisations and comprises non-state actors and associations that are not purely driven by private or economic interests, are autonomously organised, typically show civic virtue, and interact in the public sphere.

It is possible to delineate the following (non-mutually exclusive) categories of civil society actors:

- Special interest groups (for example, trade unions; professional associations for teachers, farmers, and journalists; minority and women's organisations; and veterans' associations)
- Faith-based organisations (for example, churches and Islamic associations)
- Traditional and community groups (for example, youth groups, councils of elders, women's and mother's groups; and radio listeners' clubs)
- Researchers and research institutions (for example, local and international think tanks, universities and individual researchers)

- Humanitarian or development service delivery organisations (which include local and international, ‘modern’, ‘traditional’, or religious organisations, like humanitarian aid NGOs, churches or Islamic charities)
- Human rights and advocacy organisations (which can also be clustered under special interest groups)
- Conflict resolution and peacebuilding NGOs and INGOs (which might also be advocacy or training service organisations, depending on their mandate)
- Social and political movements (which can take the form of broad-based public movements around a common cause, such as the Arab Spring, or longer-term movements, like the environmental, women’s, or peace movements)
- Business associations (for example, associations of entrepreneurs or journalists, independent of the profit-making side of business)
- Networks (which generally represent a larger number of organisations from any of the categories specified above, such as a network of religious councils)

It is important to note that civil society is a reflection of broader society, and is therefore not always the ‘good society’ that can be counted on to support peace and democratisation. Research has found that inclusive, civic, bridging and pro-peace organisations work alongside polarised, sectarian, and occasionally militant civil society organisations.



## What can civil society actors contribute to peacebuilding?

Paffenholz and Spurk have identified seven functions played by civil society in peace processes<sup>2</sup>. These functions include protection, monitoring, advocacy, socialisation, social cohesion, facilitation, and service delivery. Each function is discussed below in more detail.

### *Protection*

Protection refers to the provision of security needs by civil society actors, either alone or in cooperation with other agencies. This is normally one of the core functions provided by the state; however, in cases of acute state fragility and conflict, the relationship between state and society can break down. During and after conflict, protection becomes a precondition for other civil society functions, as civil society actors are substantially hindered from taking up peacebuilding roles when threatened by violence.

Civil society protection is often associated with specialised protection NGOs like Peace Brigades International that support local actors either indirectly, for example as a watchdog, or else directly, for example through international accompaniment. These efforts have been more effective when they have been systematically combined with monitoring and advocacy campaigns. During Nepal's civil war, for example, a number of local human rights organisations monitored human rights violations by the army and the Maoists, and systematically channelled all information to the National Human Rights Commission, the media and Amnesty International (AI). AI used the data to successfully lobby at the international level for the establishment of a UN monitoring mission.

Local civil societies have also negotiated 'zones of peace', within which arms are not allowed, and have occasionally taken over responsibility for human security initiatives such as de-mining, disarmament and demobilisation when official programmes have been found wanting.

### *Monitoring*

International and local civil society groups monitor relevant issues such as the human rights situation, or the implementation of agreements, and provide recommendations and information to decision-makers or human rights and advocacy groups. Such monitoring can work to hold governments and armed groups accountable for abuses or substandard performance, and can also serve as an early warning system (for example, the joint early warning initiative between UN OCHA, ECOWAS and a regional NGO peace network to conduct early warning in West Africa). In the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, no monitoring initiative was ever set up for the Oslo process during the 1990s. This could have had considerable impact, especially because the parties were criticised for not fulfilling their promises.

Monitoring activities are most effective when designed to harmonise with protection and advocacy initiatives. For example, the International Crisis Group (ICG) monitors the situation in conflict-affected countries and provides political analysis and recommendations to decision-makers. Due to ICG's high profile, quality of analysis, and international network and media coverage, it has become an influential monitoring institution.

## *Advocacy*

Advocacy refers to agenda-setting and the application of pressure by civil society organisations. Civil society actors can push for the commencement of negotiations, the implementation of negotiated agreements, or against the recurrence of warfare. Also important are global international advocacy campaigns that lobby, for example, against land mines, blood diamonds, or the abuse of children as soldiers. Advocacy can be divided into public and non-public forms. Public advocacy can involve petitions, demonstrations, press releases, social media or public relations campaigns. Non-public advocacy is generally back-channelled and operates through informal dialogues and relationships.

The impact of advocacy initiatives is increased when organisations have campaigning knowledge, base their advocacy on results of monitoring initiatives, and know how to use the media to support their cause. For example, in Northern Ireland, civil society groups managed to lobby successfully for the integration of human rights provisions into the peace agreement.

## *Socialisation*

Socialisation refers to in-group bonding that supports democratic behaviour and promotes tolerant and peaceful values within society. This is realised through the active participation of citizens in various associations, networks or movements. Socialisation takes place only within groups, not between former adversary groups (referred to as social cohesion below).

Every national or local association that practises peaceful coexistence contributes to this function. There are two main types of socialisation: socialisation for peace and in-group identity-building. Socialisation for peace involves activities that promote a culture of peace whether in society at large or within a single group. In-group identity-building is an important way for marginalised groups to develop a sense of political identity that allows them to operate peacefully in the political space available. For example, the in-group education of the Maya in Guatemala by the Catholic Church helped empower a generation of civic leaders. The experience of war and widespread violence allowed for the construction of a pan-Mayan identity across 24 distinct language groups.

The key institutions in society that influence how people learn democratic and conflict-response behaviour are families, schools, religious groups, secular and cultural associations, and the workplace. In most countries in conflict, these socialisation spaces tend to reinforce existing divides.

The overwhelming focus of socialisation initiatives has been on conducting short-term projects with NGOs, which, due to their limited reach and access, have no real power to socialise people.

### *Intergroup social cohesion*

Social capital between groups is invariably degraded or destroyed during war between those groups. Therefore, it is crucial to build ‘bridging ties’ across adversarial groups as well as (peaceful) ‘bonding ties’ within specific groups. The objective of social cohesion is to help these groups learn to live together in peaceful coexistence.

Social cohesion is an area where civil society organisations face challenges in making an impact. As explained in the discussion on socialisation above, divided societies have many strong socialisation institutions, including families, schools and religious organisations. When these institutions are polarised and hostile, few social cohesion initiatives can be very effective. In Somalia, for example, clan-based organisations worked to reinforce social cleavages and to weaken national cohesion. Externally driven problem-solving workshops tend to select English-speaking elites as representatives, people who are often already ‘converted’ to the idea of positive images of the other group. Evidence of this was found in an evaluation of a series of workshops in Cyprus that assessed participants’ attitudes prior to and after the programme. The evaluation revealed that most participants already had a positive attitude toward the other group before participating in the workshops.

Social cohesion initiatives may generate more impact when they aim at bringing people together to work for a common cause (for example, joint water management) rather than focusing only on reconciliation. Long-term systematic initiatives have been more effective than short-term scattered ones, especially when they have focused on a wide range of societal cleavages and also bridged the gap between difficult groups.



## Facilitation and mediation

Civil society can function as a facilitator to help bring parties together in a peace or transition process. Facilitation can take place both at the local and at the national level. For example, in Afghanistan during the Taliban rule, traditional mediation was the only resource for facilitating peace between the Taliban and the various Afghani communities. The Tribal Liaison Office helped organise local peace *jirgas* with religious and local leaders to explore options for peacebuilding. At the national level, prominent civil society leaders, international NGOs and research institutions are occasionally engaged in mediation or facilitation. For example, in Nigeria, the government nominated a Catholic priest as chief mediator between Ogoni groups, and in Nepal, each side of the conflict nominated two well-respected civil society leaders as facilitators. This facilitation can also be issue-oriented, as when civil society groups facilitate violence-free days to secure access for service delivery (vaccinations, food programmes, etc.). Hence, facilitation can operate in support of both protection and service delivery.

## Service delivery

During armed conflict, state structures are either destroyed or weakened, and the population may be starved of essential services. Civil society actors (mainly NGOs, but sometimes associations as well) can and do step forward to provide aid and social services. There is no doubt that this function is extremely important to help the war-affected population and to support reconstruction of the state and society at large. However, service delivery can have an impact on peace processes only if agencies create entry points for other functions such as protection and social cohesion, especially when large-scale violence ends. For example, in Somalia, the total absence of a state for almost two decades made service delivery the main activity performed by civil society; Islamic charities were especially successful in creating entry points for peacebuilding by extending networks across clan and regional lines.

## Seven models of civil society participation in peace and transition processes

The previous section outlined the various functions civil society can play in a peace or transition process that can be instrumental in creating positive preconditions for peace. The following section explores how civil society can engage with the main negotiating agenda of a peace or transition process, also known as Track One, presenting seven modalities of inclusion in peace and political transition processes<sup>3</sup>. These can apply to the participation of all actors other than the main negotiating parties, including civil society. The seven modalities have been developed through the Broadening Participation in Peace Negotiations project, the data from which is now housed at the Inclusive Peace and Transitions Initiative also at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva<sup>4</sup>.



A 'Yes' campaign poster for the Good Friday Agreement during simultaneous referendums in Northern Ireland.

**Direct representation at the negotiation table** can be achieved in one of three ways. First, Track One parties may include more actors in the main negotiation delegations, as seen in the current negotiations in Colombia, where the parties included more highly qualified female experts (as a result of public pressure) as well as two military personnel.

Second, parties may increase the number of negotiation delegations at the table. For example, in the negotiations for the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland almost all political parties were invited to the talks, not just the main ones. The Northern Irish Women's Coalition, a civil society organisation that faced exclusion from the talks then formed a political party solely for the purpose of being eligible to participate.

Third, parties can include almost all relevant constituencies within society. These formats are commonly referred to as National Dialogues, and can be for peacemaking (Afghanistan Emergency Loya Jirga, 2001) or constitution-making (Yemeni National Dialogue, 2011), and can take place at either the national or local levels. Direct representation in all forms is the strongest position for civil society advocacy.

Another civil society function associated with Track One inclusion is facilitation. In this model an international civil society actor (generally an international conflict-resolution or mediation NGO) coordinates and facilitates between local civil society and the conflict or negotiation parties. This model has recently been applied in the Philippines. Two international NGOs, the London-based Conciliation Resources and Geneva-based Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, played a third-party facilitation role within the International Contact Group (ICG) by providing mediation support to the official Malaysian facilitator of the peace talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and by reaching out to regional civil society networks through sustained dialogue on the Mindanao conflict.

**Observer status** can be granted to civil society groups or international and local NGOs. This happened in Liberia (2003), Sierra Leone (1996), the Solomon Islands (1991) and Burundi (1996–98).

Observer status is most closely associated with the monitoring and advocacy functions. In all the above cases, the attending civil society actors were well informed about the negotiation agenda. As a result, they were able to play a critical watchdog function, advise the conflict parties and the mediators, and form alliances with other observers to facilitate the agreement. In the case of Liberia, the groups with observer status inside the negotiations cooperated closely with groups outside the talks. They passed along critical information that allowed the outside groups to put public pressure on the parties.





**Consultations** can take place at different moments of a process – prior to, in parallel with, or after official negotiations. There are three types of consultations: officially endorsed consultations that form part of the negotiation format; unofficial consultations; and public consultations. Civil society forums can act as a consultative body to the negotiation process, provided the mediator and the conflict parties officially endorse them. The mandate of these forums can be specified by the mediator, the conflict parties, or by civil society itself. In most cases, the consultative forum follows the same agenda as the official negotiations, but it can also add issues to the negotiation agenda. The objective is to better understand how people assess the negotiation agenda, and whether they would like to add certain items.

Public consultations are conducted in many peace and transition processes. Especially during implementation phases, various commissions, such as those for constitutional reform, truth and reconciliation, or monitoring, hold broad-based public consultations to inform their activities. Consultative forums are associated with the advocacy function, as they provide an opportunity for civil society actors to have input into a negotiation process. Successful forums took place during the UN-led mediations in Guatemala (1994–96) and in Afghanistan (for one week in December 2001). In both cases, civil society groups were able to bring crucial issues to the negotiation agenda that would have otherwise been left out. In Guatemala, this especially concerned the rights of indigenous people and issues related to land and women. Eighty percent of all civil society proposals were incorporated into the peace agreement.

**Inclusive commissions** can include post-agreement commissions (for example, ceasefire- or peace-agreement monitoring commissions, truth and reconciliation commissions); commissions preparing for or conducting a peace process (such as the work of the High Commissioner for the Peace Process in Colombia); permanent bodies (such as the Interethnic Commission in Kirgizstan). The inclusion of civil society into various post-agreement mechanisms aims at strengthening democratisation as well as the sustainability of the agreement.



People lining the streets to protest against the FARC in Bogotá.

Some peace agreements also include provisions for civil society to create awareness about the agreement among the population. In Somalia, for example, the 1993 agreement included a provision stipulating that civil society delegations would travel to all parts of the country to raise awareness of the agreement. In Colombia, during the peace talks between the government and the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) from 1999 to 2002, a national committee was established tasked with consulting widely with the population.

Some agreements even provide seats for civil society representatives in national legislatures, as was the case in Liberia in 2003, Burundi in 2000 and the Philippines in 1996. General provisions are rarely effective. In cases where provisions were specific, civil society groups had already played an important role during the negotiations. These findings confirm the need for space during the negotiations to discuss the details of the implementation and monitoring provisions<sup>5</sup>. As the case of Liberia shows, the participation of specialised civil society groups (for example, for human rights monitoring) in post-agreement mechanisms has enhanced the quality of monitoring and put more pressure on the parties to comply with the agreement.

**High-level problem-solving workshops** are unofficial and generally not publicised. Sometimes referred to as Track 1.5, they bring together representatives close to the leaders of the conflict parties, and offer them a space for discussion without the pressure to reach agreement. Problem-solving workshops are another avenue for civil society groups to perform a facilitation role. For example, the Schlaining Process in the Georgian–Abkhaz conflict involved 20 dialogue workshops between 2000 and 2007, gathering over 100 Georgian and Abkhaz interlocutors. The dialogues were facilitated and organised by a British INGO and a German INGO in partnership with a range of Abkhaz and Georgian NGOs. Participants analysed all key issues in the formal negotiation process, enabling them to test ideas, and the potential reception of those ideas, in ways that could feed into the political negotiations and make them more effective. Communication channels existed with the mediators of the formal process, and the facilitators met regularly with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and other senior UN staff in Tbilisi and Sukhumi. Though the Schlaining Process came to an end in 2007, it fostered a generation of ideas and communication channels across the conflict divide.

**Public decision-making:** After negotiation, peace agreements and/or new constitutions are often submitted for ratification by the population of the society (or societies) concerned. This is particularly common in democratic societies. Votes are normally treated as binding, and hence are a crucial moment in a negotiation process. The success of a public vote depends on a number of factors, such as the level of public support for and understanding of the agreement; the pertinence of the questions put to the public; and the mobilisation of public support for or against the referendum. Referendums can have unwanted outcomes, as seen in Cyprus with the referendum over the Annan Plan in 2004, or the failed ratification by the parliaments of the normalisation protocols between Armenia and Turkey in 2010. The timing of and issues put to referendums therefore need to be part of a carefully planned strategy.

**Mass action** may create a general pro- or anti-process atmosphere. As already observed, mass action can be the most potent expression of the advocacy function. In Mexico in 1994, widespread public outrage and protest made it impossible for the Mexican government to continue its military campaign against the Zapatista Army of National Liberation in Chiapas, effectively forcing a ceasefire. In contrast, during the 2002 peace process in Sri Lanka, demonstrations against peace negotiations and the Norwegian facilitation – often carried out by Buddhist monks – became more frequent and louder than the demonstrations in support of the peace process.



## Conclusions

Local and international civil society organisations are a pervasive feature of contemporary peacebuilding. Civil society organisations continue to play important roles in protecting people from violence, providing services, monitoring human rights abuses, and advocating for an end to wars or authoritarian rule. Civil society organisations and actors also play an important role in building peace at the local level as well as through their direct participation in Track One negotiations. The value of this participation, in terms of enhancing the sustainability of peace agreements, has been confirmed by research. However, the debates and examples discussed in this article have highlighted a number of important issues that will determine the future relevance of civil society's role in peace processes.

First, Track One mediators' and conflict parties' engagement of civil society is still far from routine. Nor is it always designed in such a way that civil society actors are able to make their most effective contribution to a process, without adding undue complexity. Better research-to-policy transfer is needed to help mediators and negotiators understand and manage this complex issue.

Second, civil society actors do not always engage in the activities most appropriate to a given context and phase of a conflict. The most striking examples are the functions of protection, monitoring, socialisation and social cohesion. While protection and monitoring are always highly relevant during armed conflict and war, there are few civil society organisations performing these roles during these phases. On the other hand, many organisations engage in social cohesion and socialisation initiatives, including dialogue projects, conflict-resolution workshops, exchange programmes and peace education projects during these phases, even though they have been shown to be more relevant after large-scale violence has ended.

Finally, civil society organisations are a mirror of the encompassing society, supporting peace as well as, in some cases, obstructing peace processes by preaching hate and polarising adversary groups. It is therefore not simply a normatively good move to involve a broad set of actors, but a sensitive and delicate process. What different actors in civil society (both international and local) can contribute to peace processes differs considerably and is also dependent on a set of context-specific factors, such as the level of violence, the role of the state, and the role of the media, as well as on the behaviour of powerful regional actors.

For biography of the author, see page 37.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> T. Paffenholz and C. Spurr, 'A Comprehensive Analytical Framework', in T. Paffenholz (ed), *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2010), 65-78.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> T. Paffenholz, 'Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Beyond the Inclusion-Exclusion Dichotomy' *Negotiation Journal* 30 (2014), 69-91.

<sup>4</sup> For more results see: [www.inclusivepeace.org](http://www.inclusivepeace.org)

<sup>5</sup> D. Lanz, 'Who Gets a Seat at the Table? A Framework for Understanding the Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion in Peace Negotiations', *International Negotiation* 16 (2011), 275-295.

## Inclusivity and the peace process in Burma/Myanmar – perspectives of an ethnic leader and a civil society activist

For almost a decade, from 2003 to 2012, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation supported actors in Burma's democracy movement based in Thailand, through a project called 'Another Development for Burma'. In recent years the initiated reform process in Burma has enabled most of the Foundation's contacts and cooperating partners to return to the country, at least temporarily. Some of them are now actively involved in Burma's peace process, directly or in monitoring functions. In this chapter, ethnic leader and negotiator Lian Sakhong and civil society activist Paul Sein Twa answer questions regarding challenges and opportunities for an inclusive peace process in Burma<sup>1</sup>.

As explained in the country case study on Burma/Myanmar in part 2, ceasefire negotiations between the Myanmar government and the country's many ethnic armed groups have seen some progress in recent years. However, clashes have continued in Kachin, Shan and Karen states, and as of December 2015 the 'nationwide' ceasefire agreement has only been signed by a few ethnic armed groups.

**Lian Sakhong** is a member of the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) and of the Senior Delegation for Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (SD), the bodies that have been negotiating on behalf of 16 ethnic armed groups in the ceasefire negotiations with the Myanmar government since late 2013. He is ethnic Chin and represents the Chin National Front (CNF) in the NCCT. He was assigned to draft the texts for both the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement and the Framework for Political Dialogue, proposed by the ethnic armed groups.

Because of his active involvement in the 1988 movement and 1990 elections, Lian had to flee the country and spent more than 20 years in exile – in India, Sweden and Thailand. During his time in exile he held leading positions in ethnic political alliances, such as the Ethnic Nationalities Council and United Nationalities League for Democracy (Liberated Areas), and wrote numerous books and papers on the political and social situation in modern Burma, in both English and Burmese. In 2007 he was awarded the Martin Luther King Prize in Sweden. He was able to return to his country for the first time in 2012.



*'Inclusiveness' has been a key term in the ceasefire negotiations in Burma/ Myanmar, referring to the inclusion of all ethnic armies in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). Why is all-inclusiveness considered important? What have been the obstacles to an all-inclusive agreement?*

The ethnic armed groups have adopted an all-inclusive policy as they fear that if some groups have signed the NCA and some groups have not, the government will put strong military pressure on those who have not signed. All ethnic armed groups have had negative experiences in the past; in the 1990s, while most of ethnic armed groups signed bilateral ceasefire agreements with the then military regime, those who did not sign a ceasefire, especially the Karen National Union (KNU), faced a severe military offensive from the government. This was how the KNU lost their strongholds, including the famous Manaplaw Camp<sup>2</sup>.

The problem that we are facing now is that we ethnic groups want peace and would like to engage in a political dialogue in order to solve the political crisis in Burma. Our aim is not only to end more than 60 years of armed conflicts but also to solve the root cause of civil war, which is politics. This country's problems are political, not military. Therefore we want to solve political problems through political means, not through armed struggle. That's why we want to sign the NCA together and engage in a dialogue together. But the government refuses our collective effort, and applies a divide-and-rule policy. While they recognise some ethnic armed groups, they refuse to recognise others on two different accounts. They refuse to let the Arakan National Council, Lahu Democratic Union and Wa National Organisation sign, saying that they do not meet the criteria of ethnic armed groups, meaning they do not possess enough troops. But remember, we ethnic armed groups are engaging in guerrilla warfare. As guerrilla fighters you don't need a big army; a few soldiers can do a lot of damage. Secondly, they refuse to include the Arakan Army, Ta-ang National Liberation Army and Kokang, giving the reason that they are still engaged in heavy fighting with the government. There is something wrong with this reasoning, I think. We want to sign the NCA because we want to stop more than 60 years of fighting in this country. If you refuse to include those who are fighting, then what is the point of an NCA? The government wants to sign the NCA only with those who signed bilateral ceasefire agreements previously.

Unfortunately, in the end, we had to let go of the all-inclusive policy and some ethnic armed groups signed the NCA in October 2015, while others didn't. We signed in order to get the political dialogue started, but the NCA is merely a means not the goal; our goal is to solve the political crisis in our country, including to put an end to sixty-years of civil war.

*This volume explores more broadly how various stakeholders can be included or excluded from peacebuilding efforts. Can you reflect on opportunities and challenges for you, as an ethnic leader and negotiator, to include the views and perspectives of various relevant stakeholders?*

In the NCA text, we adopted a seven-step political process or roadmap: (i) signing the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, (ii) adopting the Framework for Political Dialogue, (iii) a National Dialogue, (iv) a Union Peace Conference, (v) signing the Union Peace Accord, (vi) ratifying the Union Peace Accord in Parliament, and (vii) implementing the Union Peace Accord. We are still at the first step of a very long peace process.

At the NCA negotiation, the main actors are those who are engaging in armed conflicts. So, at this level the government and ethnic armed groups are the only two parties who are negotiating for the NCA, meaning to stop fighting. But as soon as the NCA is signed, we want all the stakeholders in this country, including women, youth, civil society organisations, community-based groups, religious leaders and political parties, to be invited to get involved in the peace process. We have designed the dialogue process in such a way that at the National Dialogue all stakeholders can participate from where they are. Unless and until all stakeholders are involved in this peace process they will not feel that they belong to it; so we want all the peoples of Burma to feel that they belong to this peace process, and that they are part of making peace in this country. The peoples of Burma have suffered together for more than 60 years, and they should enjoy the results of peace together as well. That is why we adopted the ‘all-inclusive policy’.

*Can you give an example from your own organisation, the Chin National Front (CNF)? Has the Chin leadership listened to the voices of Chin women’s groups, youth groups, civil society organisations or communities?*

Since we signed the Bilateral Ceasefire Agreement with the government in December 2012, we, the CNF, have conducted what we call the Chin Public Consultation. We held a series of public consultations in all the nine townships in Chin State as well as outside of Chin State, such as Sagaing Division, Magwe Division and other regions where Chin people are living. The way we conducted the consultations was that we asked the people what kind of political system they wished for their own future. How would they like to develop their ways of life, their culture, their literature? We even asked how to improve their traditional farming, etc. The consultations were conducted not only in the town but also at the village level where people came and engaged in dialogue among themselves. Some interest groups also participated, such as environmental groups, women’s groups, literature groups and political parties. At the final stage all groups from various

parts of Chin State came together to Haka, the capital of Chin State, and organised the Chin National Conference that lasted for five days. The result of the Chin National Conference is what the CNF would like to present at the National Dialogue as the wishes of the Chin people. We are thinking that instead of presenting the CNF policy, we would like to share the voices of the people at the National Dialogue, or at the Union Peace Conference, which will eventually become the foundation of the Union Peace Accord.

We must, however, confess that the first round of public consultation was not perfect, and the result of the Chin National Conference was not satisfactory. The reason is simple: people living under military dictatorship for so long do not dare to express their genuine feeling and what they really want. Fear dominates their life. Moreover, since they lived so long under the military dictatorship, their level of knowledge is very low. So they don't even know how to differentiate between democracy and dictatorship. The CNF, therefore, organised a series of political training and public awareness meetings. As soon as we have signed the NCA the CNF intends to do a second round of public consultations, and we hope that our model will be adopted by other ethnic groups as well.

Refugee camp on the  
Thai-Burma border.



***Have you used local ethnic language radio or other media to reach out to communities with information about the peace process? Can the media be better used to create transparency and spread information to all those who are affected by the negotiations?***

Media freedom in this country is rather remarkable. You know, our country was under military dictatorship for so long, and media freedom was introduced only after the 2010 election. Every time we have a negotiation with the government there are so many journalists from print media, radio and TV bombarding us with so many questions. And there are many ethnic language media operating in this country. Even in Chin State there are several print media outlets and TV stations. Yes, I think we can reach people through the media rather well.

***You yourself had to spend more than 25 years in exile because of your involvement in politics. Have diasporas and refugees (in neighbouring countries and around the world) been able to engage in the peace process so far?***

I have lived in exile for more than 25 years now: almost half my life. A quarter of a century is a very long time in one person's life. In 2012, my name was removed from the black list and I am now able to work inside Burma. In 2013, I was chosen as a member of the NCCT to negotiate the ceasefire agreement with the government. I am so lucky that I was assigned to draft not only the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement text by the NCCT, but also to draft the Framework for Political Dialogue.

In the process of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, I have consulted not only with the general public inside Burma but also with exile groups. But we have to remind ourselves first that the ceasefire agreement will be signed between the government and ethnic armed organisations, who have been fighting each other for more than 60 years. Since the Ceasefire Agreement is between those holding arms and fighting, it should be negotiated between the two fighting groups. For that reason, the NCA negotiation is conducted by the government and ethnic armed groups, without the involvement of political parties and civil society organisations. But as soon as we sign the NCA, they, political parties and civil society organisations, and all the stakeholders of the country, should be involved in the peace process, especially in the National Dialogue. This is the way we are designing for the whole peace process.

***Why are inclusion and consultative processes challenging and difficult?***

We are facing many challenges in this negotiation process, but the most difficult one to me is the level of trust; trust is almost non-existent on both sides. At the beginning I thought trust was not an issue because on both sides the negotiators could easily talk to each other and mingled with each other very well at a social gathering. But when we talk about the real issues,

the dynamics can change so easily. Many top ethnic leaders simply cannot trust the government because of the many negative experiences that they endured in their own life. There were similar negotiations for peace in 1958, 1963, the 1970s and 80s, and recently in the 1990s under the military regime called the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). None of these ceasefire agreements transformed into a genuine political dialogue. So, they say, why would this time be different? But I am hoping that this time will be different because we all want peace. The government is seriously engaging in political reform, all the ethnic armed groups would like to sign the NCA and want to engage in dialogue, and all the peoples of Burma want to end 60 years of civil war. I think this is the best chance and the best opportunity that we have to make peace in 60 years of our country's history.

■ *How can international actors promote an inclusive peace process in Burma?*

We cannot say that there are really active international actors. Although we do receive a lot of international support, this peace process is a genuinely domestic effort. However, we never neglect or ignore the role of the international community. We need international support, and we want the international community to be part of the process. We have always invited the UN and China as observers at the ceasefire negotiations. And every time we have a negotiation or talks with the government, we have always conducted diplomatic briefings for government representatives who reside in Rangoon: from the US, UK, Japan and many other countries. So, we are trying very hard to bring the international community into this peace process and properly inform them about the progress we make.

Lemro River, Chin State. |



One thing to remember is that Burma is located at the strategic point of international geopolitics. We are in between South and South East Asia, and between two giant Asian countries, China and India. And all of us ethnic groups transcend international boundaries: the Chin are living in Burma, India and Bangladesh; the Arakan are in Burma and Bangladesh; the Kachin are in Burma, India and China; the Shan are in Burma, China, Laos and Thailand; the Karenni, Karen and Mon are in Burma and Thailand. Our homelands are divided by international borders. So, without the involvement of our neighbouring countries, where we live as indigenous and native peoples, we would not be able to achieve sustainable peace. Unless we can have sustainable peace in Burma, there will not be regional stability either. So, the peace process in Burma is very important also for our neighbouring countries, namely, China, India, Thailand and Bangladesh. That's why we want to invite them as witnesses at the signing ceremony of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.

I would also like to express another aspect of international community involvement in this peace process. We ethnic groups wanted to invite Western countries to be witnesses at the NCA so that they can be part of both peacebuilding and helping us with the post-conflict reconstruction. But China is not very happy that ethnic groups are so close to Western countries, especially to the US, UK and Japan (though Japan is not the West). They have two reasons for this: one is that China supported the Wa, Kokang and Mungla ethnic groups who are mostly ethnic Chinese and live on the border with China. The US accused many Wa and Kokang leaders of being drug dealers, so they are on the wanted list of the US Drug Enforcement Administration. That's why the Wa issued a statement recently saying that they would not allow any Western countries to be involved in Burma's peace process. The second reason is related to the first: China wants to become the unrivalled superpower in the East and are not so happy to see any Western involvement in this peace process. This is one of the difficulties we face in this peace process.

***In what ways do the funding structures of international actors promote or hamper inclusive peacebuilding initiatives?***

There is an International Peace Support Group (IPSG)<sup>3</sup> formed by nine countries. Some other countries also provide funding for this effort. At this stage of the negotiation, I think we do not need big funding, but we will need more when we engage in the National Dialogue, and if the dialogue process progresses well we will need more funding for refugee return, for rebuilding the lives of IDPs and others. We appreciate very much what the international community has done for us, but we will need more support and assistance in the future.



**Paul Sein Twa** is a social and environmental activist from Burma who has been working for the rights and livelihood of the country's ethnic communities for more than 20 years. He is ethnic Karen and has been based in Thailand since 1995 due to the conflict in Burma. He holds leading and coordinating positions within Karen civil society and the wider movement for ethnic rights and democracy in Burma, including as Director of Karen Environment and Social Action Network and Coordinator for Burma Environment Working Group.

In 2012 he and fellow Karen activists initiated the Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN), which monitors and raises awareness of the peace process, and facilitates consultation and advocacy for a sustainable and equitable peace in Burma. The network consists of nearly 30 Karen community organisations based in Burma and Thailand.

*To what extent do you find the ongoing peace process in Burma inclusive? Are different stakeholders consulted by the leaders who are in the driving seat of the process?*

The current peace process is lauded by those in the driving seat as the best opportunity for peace, as there has been nothing like it in Burma's history. But this is clearly an elite-led process. We civil society organisations, in Burma and abroad, have been calling for the opening of a space for civil society to engage, and there have been numerous comments and statements from CSOs about the flaws in the process. Both sides in the negotiations – the government and the ethnic armed groups – have left civil society out of the process. It's a big pity they did that, and it's one of the reasons that the NCA text is so weak, in the sense that it does not provide clear and equal footing in the political dialogue platform for the ethnic armed groups. In other words, the government and its army have the upper hand in all matters.

Several reasons have been mentioned for not including civil society in the process. First, ethnic leaders keep saying that this is not the right time – the NCA negotiations are about military issues, and thus a matter only for those holding arms. With this argument, civil society groups are seen as a stakeholder that can only contribute with technical support and social services at a later stage. But the NCA text actually only includes two chapters on military matters, while the rest of the text deals with issues to which CSOs could well have contributed. Second, some claim there are confidential issues in a negotiation process that civil society should not know. But I don't think those confidential issues are dealt with openly at the negotiation table anyway. Those discussions take place behind closed doors. Thirdly, the negotiating parties are afraid that too many actors involved can dilute the negotiations. I can see this point, but instead of excluding all an assessment needs to be made of what actors are relevant, what value-added they have and what the best channels would be for CSO participation.

I believe it has been intentional on the part of those who call the shots in the negotiations not to involve civil society, as such involvement could have challenged the predetermined outcomes and roadmap of the peace process. It should be noted, however, that while not including civil society in the formal dialogue process, some ethnic armed groups are working with CSOs to prepare policy input for future federal structures for health, education, land and natural resources management.

### Why is civil society engagement important and needed in this peace process?

I can see at least three reasons why civil society groups should have been included at an early stage of the process. First, civil society groups are striving together with conflict-affected communities for localised and deep peace, and for ethnic political grievances to be addressed. Civil society's early presence in the process could therefore have contributed to a better NCA text that would address issues that are important to the people, in particular, physical security for local people who live close to Burmese military camps and land tenure security for people living in conflict areas. Those issues have been ignored for so long and should not wait till the political dialogue set to take place at a later stage.

Second, if civil society had been involved, at least to a minimum level of observing the negotiations, those civil society representatives could have comprehended what was going on and could have shared the information with their constituencies. Debate and discussion could flow back and forth and that would have made people buy into the process and increased people's confidence in the ceasefire.

Lastly, the government's influential Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC) has been tipping the power in favour of the government in the negotiations. As for ethnic armed groups, they lack human resources and the necessary support. The involvement of CSOs could have balanced this power manoeuvring.

Those are the benefits of inclusivity, as I see it. Fighting at the table is more difficult than fighting with guns. You need more human resources and expertise, you need the people's support and you need to manage their expectations. We need a forum to facilitate transparent and good public debate so that different actors can be heard, including academics, civil society and ordinary people. The way the process runs now, everything is highjacked by the political elites.

Refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border.



*You have been based in Thailand for many years, like many other Karen people from Burma. Is there a difference in how ethnic Karen based inside and outside of Burma's borders are able to follow and contribute to the peace process?*

There is a narrative that border-based groups are always 'against' and critical of the process, compared to groups inside the country. We are accused of barking like dogs from afar. It is true that civil society based on the border has been stronger in its criticism, but I would say the diaspora is more concerned because they are able to follow the news better and tend to have more information. We have long-term experience of monitoring the political developments, and we can identify hidden risks and loopholes.

In addition, diaspora groups deliberately use their relatively secure situation to voice concerns, knowing that it is more difficult to speak your views openly inside the country. Karen groups in Europe, US, Canada and Australia can be even more outspoken than those of us based in Thailand who also have personal security issues to consider.

Despite some differences among civil society groups, I don't think there is a clear division between groups inside and outside of Burma. In fact, since the preliminary bilateral ceasefires in early 2012, Karen groups inside and on the border have built a stronger network and better coordination in their engagement in peace process. The Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN) is a good example of this. Over the last four years, the network has been able to shed light on what peace really means for local people living in conflict areas, on Karen people's vision of peace and top priorities for peacebuilding, on the key factors driving the world's longest-running civil war, and what the international community could do to better support people's desire for deep peace.

Consultation meeting  
in Karen State.



This initiative was well received by the groups we have engaged with. KPSN has also done important work highlighting its critique on Japan International Cooperation Agency's proposed blueprint for promoting peace and development in southeastern Burma. The analysis and recommendations outlined in this report are important for foreign investors if they want to promote peace, development and best practice in the region<sup>4</sup>.

I also want to point out that we didn't start by openly criticising our KNU leaders. At first, civil society, including groups based in Burma, on the Thai border and in the broader diaspora, wrote letters and called for transparency in the process, but as our concerns weren't taken into account, we had to criticise publicly.



### ***What are the main obstacles to an inclusive peace process in Burma?***

Real inclusion can only be achieved if there is genuine will for broad inclusion and understanding of the real benefits of such inclusion. Often stakeholders are consulted, but only as tokens in the process. If you ask leaders they will say 'yes we have done consultations', but not in the sense we mean. Leaders often come to present something that already has been decided and give little room for two-way communication. Do they take on the messages from those consulted? Do they change anything? For meaningful consultations good and accessible information also needs to be provided beforehand so that people can really give comments and feedback.

The military government is also excluding many ethnic armed groups from the process, claiming they do not want to participate and now engaging in major military offensives against them. In fact, the government designed this exclusive approach, which will never bring peace to our country. It must change this attitude and work with all ethnic groups. There is worrying propaganda that ethnic armed groups who have not signed the NCA are 'pro-Chinese'. Actually it seems that by excluding them the military government is pushing them more and more towards China, while Western countries are funding peace processes led by this unitary government. This is a very dangerous trend for our country.

### ***How can international actors promote an inclusive peace process in Burma? In what ways do the funding structures of international actors promote or hamper inclusive peacebuilding initiatives?***

We welcome the international community's support. It is crucial and has great potential. However, the way the peace process is developing now is influenced by the West and the international community's economic interests. They approach the situation as a normal case of statebuilding, which works in favour of the government's unitary system. The narrative is that poverty and the weaknesses of the government administration are behind the problems in Burma, while the root causes are actually political.

The international community wants the NCA to be signed no matter if the deal is good or bad for the ethnic armed groups. We feel that powerful countries work behind the scenes and indirectly pressure the ethnic groups to sign. Instead they should analyse the root causes of the conflict and understand the political grievances of the ethnic groups.

By channelling funding for peacebuilding through the government, international donors have significantly weakened the negotiating power of the ethnic groups. This funding should come to both sides. Also the support to civil society is imbalanced. Only privileged and registered national and international NGOs that follow the money get funding. It's difficult for groups based on the border, as well as non-registered groups inside Burma, to access most of the funding due to issues of legal status. For example, EU funding often requires the recipient to be legally registered.

The peace donors group has now announced a new funding mechanism, the 'Joint Peace Fund', and it is very important for us to keep a close eye on it. Will this fund repeat the same old mistakes or be more transparent, accountable and equitable for all? So far it looks as if the fund assumes the conflict is driven by poverty – somehow Western donors think they can buy peace. But if donors yet again try to leapfrog or sidestep the root causes of conflict with so-called 'peace dividend' projects, that can actually fuel conflict.

At this initial stage of the peace process, in which our people are seeking the right to decide our own development path, it is important that any peace fund empowers local ethnic social structures. Ethnic people have been managing their own social and natural resources for decades and we have shown our ability to govern those better than the military government. Of course, in the current situation when political dialogue has not even started, it is improbable that the military government will register and recognise these ethnic structures. If those existing structures are also not recognised and supported by peace donors, the government will expand its centralised structures into ethnic areas, and that will fuel community conflict.

I see that funding easily creates splits between groups, especially if there are interests behind the funding. If the international community and donors are genuine in their support, they should do real assessments of what is going well and what is wrong, be honest and try to improve support when things have not worked as expected.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> As mentioned in the case study in part 2, the country goes by two names. In this article we refer to it as Burma, as that was the name mostly used during the interviews.
- <sup>2</sup> The Manaplau camp was the KNU military headquarters for more than four decades. It was attacked and occupied by the Burmese military in 1995.
- <sup>3</sup> The International Peace Support Group (IPSG) is made up of INGOs involved in capacity-building initiatives to support the ethnic armed groups negotiating for just and equitable peace. It is an informal network of 20 members that holds a coordination meeting once a month in Bangkok. Source: Myanmar Peace Monitor, [www.mmpeacemonitor.org](http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org)
- <sup>4</sup> The KPSN report "Critique of Japan International Cooperation Agency's Blueprint for Development in Southeastern Burma/Myanmar" is available at [www.kesan.asia/index.php/resources/publications-media/reports/finish/4-reports/99-critique-of-japan-international-cooperation-agency-s-blueprint-for-development-in-south-eastern-burma-myanmar-full-report-english](http://www.kesan.asia/index.php/resources/publications-media/reports/finish/4-reports/99-critique-of-japan-international-cooperation-agency-s-blueprint-for-development-in-south-eastern-burma-myanmar-full-report-english)

# Can peacebuilding practice help build more inclusive societies in Europe?

Christelle Mestre and Renée Larivière

Over the last decade, several European cities have witnessed an increasing number of social protests and riots, particularly by young people. Their growing grievances, at times resulting in violent unrest in urban suburbs, are being attributed to social, economic, and political exclusion. Indeed, demonstrations that have taken place over the past few years in London, Paris and Stockholm have been largely viewed as a reaction to increasing economic inequalities, a lack of meaningful opportunities for engagement, as well as general social marginalisation.

| People of Tensta, Sweden.



## 'Building peace' in the European context?

While there is growing recognition of the challenges fuelling unrest in many of Europe's socio-economically marginalised suburbs, the initiatives and programmes seeking to address these challenges are not sufficient. High rates of youth unemployment continue to feed a growing anger that cannot be solely addressed through economic growth. An increase in youth radicalisation and the urgency of the current migration crisis further reinforce this discontent, threatening the social fabric of many European nations. This multidimensional crisis poses new challenges to European governments whose competing political and financial priorities provide limited space and opportunities to implement long-term solutions to create more inclusive societies.

Reflecting on these challenges, we see that the issues threatening societal cohesion in Europe today are not dissimilar to those affecting countries that have experienced war or violent conflict. Without equating issues that beset countries at war, such as Syria, with problems faced by European cities, we can observe some similarities in terms of rising societal tensions. These tensions reflect people's sense that they lack social belonging and are not meaningfully engaged in the development of their own communities and nations. Many groups, especially young people, are challenging this like never before.

The mounting frustrations and violence require that we look more closely at the issue of *exclusion* that is sowing the seeds of resentment, independent of a society's level of development. The situation also requires looking at how *mistrust* can escalate into violence, even from small-scale problems.

Recent experiences show that the principles and foundations of peacebuilding have the potential to create innovative processes and to bring alternative solutions to addressing the current challenges in Europe. It is therefore legitimate to reflect on whether we can find inspiration and draw useful lessons from the vast experience that has emerged from the peacebuilding world. Can a peacebuilding approach be used to address the current European crisis? Can peacebuilding practice bring new thinking and spur innovations to build more inclusive societies in Europe?

With these questions in mind, Interpeace embarked on an experiment to put its 20 years of experience supporting peacebuilding in fragile countries to the test in Europe.

Stockholm  
suburb Tensta.





Interpeace consultations with youth in Tensta.

## Peacebuilding in Sweden – Interpeace’s engagement in a suburb of Stockholm

Two years ago, building on its extensive experience working with marginalised groups in various contexts, Interpeace started to explore how its methods and approaches could help address the dynamics of social exclusion and promote a more inclusive society in Sweden.

Like many other European societies, Sweden has faced challenges of exclusion and lack of integration. Home to a multitude of nationalities, Sweden has had a long history of welcoming migrants from many countries around the world, especially over the past 40 years<sup>1</sup>. Sweden’s long-successful economic formula of capitalism interwoven with its substantial social welfare system has been challenged in the last two decades, especially as a result of the global economic downturns. Consequently, people in Sweden, as elsewhere around the globe, have had to contend with rising social inequality as neoliberal capitalism’s drive toward privatisation has brought austerity measures and cuts in public services.

Located on the outskirts of Sweden’s capital city, Tensta is a suburb with a large immigrant population<sup>2</sup> and has experienced social unrest and violent protests in recent years. The riots, such as those that took place in 2012 and 2013, have brought to light some of the underlying challenges facing Swedish society today, such as the widening socio-economic gap between ‘native’ Swedes and those with an immigrant background. Media coverage in Sweden has further reinforced the portrayal of Tensta and other relatively marginalised suburbs as unsafe and even dangerous. Recent incidents of violence highlight an urgent need to create spaces for dialogue, so as to start addressing underlying grievances and the frustrations of those living in the shadows of Sweden’s major cities.

Drawing on lessons learned and parallels from its work with marginalised groups and the youth sector in conflict-affected and fragile states, Interpeace launched a pilot project in Tensta in 2014. Interpeace carried out consultations with a broad range of stakeholders – including teachers, police, religious leaders, families and representatives of civil society – seeking to better understand the challenges and opportunities that people, and youth in particular, face in Tensta today.

### *Using video to engage youth*

It is often difficult to effectively engage youth, especially those aged 15–19 years old, in comprehensive discussions about the opportunities and challenges they face.

To overcome this challenge, Interpeace gave video cameras to a group of young people in Tensta to let them tell their story in their own words. This resulted in the production of a short documentary, entitled *Dreams from Tensta*. The video explores the aspirations and key challenges facing the local community.

See [www.interpeace.org/resource/dreams-from-tensta](http://www.interpeace.org/resource/dreams-from-tensta)



## Challenges to Sweden's social fabric

The work Interpeace carried out in Tensta sheds light on critical and complex challenges threatening social cohesion in Sweden's urban environments.

Key factors contributing to the feeling of social exclusion, particularly among youth, included issues related to identity, such as discrimination based on colour, nationality and cultural background; insufficient Swedish language skills; and difficulties in defining one's own role in Swedish society and culture. Despite Sweden's long tradition of welcoming migrants, many newcomers and second-generation immigrants have difficulty finding their place.

As in many other immigrant suburbs, Tensta's youth are often caught between two worlds: Swedish culture and the traditions of their parents who immigrated to Sweden. Navigating the complexities of being a young person, an immigrant and a Swede is not easy for many of them.

Despite the challenges of forming their identity, young people from Tensta have developed a strong bond with their district. They speak passionately about Tensta as a multicultural and community-based area.

The findings of Interpeace's work also revealed that the residents of Tensta feel excluded from the rest of Swedish society. This feeling is fuelled by a perceived neglect by state authorities. Tensta residents perceive that the local municipality, for example, is not providing them with the same level of services as their neighbours in the area of Spånga. They express concerns that politicians are disconnected from their community's realities and fail to take their needs into consideration when drafting policies that affect them.

The way Tensta has been portrayed by the media is another factor contributing to this feeling of marginalisation. Journalists often reinforce existing negative stereotypes about the area and its residents. However, the young people Interpeace met challenged this negative image of their neighbourhood. They were eager to dispel these stereotypes and expressed pride in being from Tensta.

In addition to perceived neglect by state authorities, spatial segregation between wealthier and poorer neighbourhoods has contributed to a sense of exclusion. Despite being geographically close to the centres of major cities, residents in neighbourhoods such as Tensta, Husby and Rosengård feel increasingly disconnected from mainstream Swedish society.

In Sweden's urban neighbourhoods, high levels of unemployment, limited economic means and the absence of public spaces in which to socialise all have considerable influence on the social wellbeing of residents, and youth in particular. Furthermore, the lack of sufficient resources in education and early employment, the primary channels through which young people become integrated in society, is causing growing tensions. With difficult socio-economic conditions come rising levels of criminality, which in turn discourages businesses from operating in the neighbourhood. This limits local economic opportunities for residents in the district.

Interpeace also found that the over-negative image in local and national media of suburbs with large immigrant populations has reinforced the feeling of marginalisation and overshadows many of the positive assets of these suburbs. In fact, the majority of residents of communities such as Tensta proudly boast about the multicultural and welcoming nature of their neighbourhood.

These differences in perception make it difficult to bridge the gap between residents of Tensta and the rest of Swedish society.

The lack of trust and dialogue between youth and law enforcement agencies has fuelled tensions and often contributed to dramatic incidents. Increasing positive interactions between the police and urban youth, outside of formal settings, can serve to address tensions and reduce the frequency of confrontations.

## **Adapting the peacebuilding discourse and practice**

Interpeace's project in Sweden found that exclusion, in a context of increased socio-economic inequality, deeply affects the residents of Sweden's suburbs and contributes to poor integration with the rest of Swedish society. The work highlighted the importance of engaging local communities so that their views can be shared and their voices heard by local authorities.

This inclusive and participatory approach, used in every context where Interpeace operates, ensures that a broad base of people share a sense of ownership and responsibility for strengthening social cohesion, reconciliation and the improvement of their society. By engaging everyone in a process of change, inclusivity begins to build bridges of understanding. This, in time, enables the society collectively to move towards greater cohesion and, in certain contexts, more peaceful environments.

In Sweden, the principles of inclusive engagement were well received by the local actors. Moving away from the dichotomised notions of peace and conflict, the project applied the concepts of social cohesion and integration, which are well understood by local actors and relate to the Swedish context.

Creativity and flexibility were particularly relevant elements in the dynamic context of Sweden. The use of social technology proved highly relevant in the country's digital environment, specifically the use of video to engage young people who are often hard to reach.

Beyond the technical adaptations of Interpeace's approach in the European context, the experience in Sweden demonstrated that there are new ways of thinking about 'building peace' in places that are closer to 'home'. The universal principles of inclusivity and participation, which are at the core of peacebuilding, have the potential to contribute to laying the foundations for more cohesive and inclusive societies, regardless of their geographic location and level of development.

Given today's outlook in the European context, bringing people together, asking questions, listening to various voices and shaping common engagement is needed now more than ever.

- <sup>1</sup> It is estimated that among the 9.6 million inhabitants of Sweden, those with a foreign background represent 20.75 per cent of the total population (including native-born with two foreign-born parents), or 15.9 per cent if we only consider the foreign-born, who are largely concentrated in the outskirts of Sweden's large cities. (Source: Stockholm's statistics, accessed August 2014, [www.scb.se/sv/Hitta-statistik/Statistikdatabasen/Variabelvaljare/?px\\_tableid=ssd\\_extern%3aUtlSvBakgTot&rxid=825bb12e-45b4-468b-8828-d617b10149ac](http://www.scb.se/sv/Hitta-statistik/Statistikdatabasen/Variabelvaljare/?px_tableid=ssd_extern%3aUtlSvBakgTot&rxid=825bb12e-45b4-468b-8828-d617b10149ac))
- <sup>2</sup> The district of Tensta has received many migrants over the last 30 years. More than 85 per cent of the population has a foreign background, and Tensta counts more than 30 nationalities among its residents. (Source: The City of Stockholm Executive Office, 'Youth work and projects in Tensta', accessed June 2014, [www.tenstacc.se/2b/library/files/11/ungdomsverksamheter\\_S\\_T.pdf](http://www.tenstacc.se/2b/library/files/11/ungdomsverksamheter_S_T.pdf))

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# The private sector as a stakeholder in inclusive peacebuilding

Jolyon Ford

## Introduction

Any serious notion of ‘inclusivity’ in peacebuilding arguably cannot omit the private sector. Businesspeople, firms, financial institutions, for-profit collectives and others are important socio-political actors in addition to their economic role. In any given setting they may be capable of helping or hindering wider efforts to prevent conflict and consolidate peace. Policymakers and practitioners can conceivably advance their peacebuilding and development objectives by being more open to engaging business actors. Such engagement would look to better understand, influence and potentially harness these actors’ peacebuilding-related impacts, interests and ideas.



There is now much greater policy receptivity to the private sector as a peacebuilding stakeholder, and much greater research attention paid to it. This growing interest is partly a function of wider development policy shifts. This is evidenced by the way major donors – and the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – have come to emphasise the private sector's vital role in meeting development goals generally (see box on SDGs). It also reflects outreach by business leaders, who are increasingly conscious of social impact, political risk and the limited capacity of public authorities to meet development goals unassisted, especially in post-conflict settings.

The ways in which commercial activity can contribute negatively to the onset, duration or severity of armed conflict are fairly well established. By contrast, viewing business actors positively, as peacebuilding partners or stakeholders, is fairly new terrain<sup>1</sup>. For some, the for-profit factor may raise questions about the legitimacy of including business in peacemaking or peacebuilding processes, although the private sector has an obvious social and developmental significance in most situations. It should therefore be logical that business representatives – like those of trade unions, religious organisations, women's groups, and so on – potentially be included in conversations and actions concerning sustainable peace.

What does it really mean to 'engage' the private sector in peacebuilding, beyond mere rhetoric about including 'all stakeholders'? What are the policy risks of closer relations, and how do policymakers decide which businesses might be appropriate dialogue or project partners? Why should businesspeople be interested in appropriate overt collaboration on peacebuilding? How have authorities ignored or indulged business interests in past conflict-affected situations?

Clearly, a whole research agenda exists on such questions. The intention of this brief paper is less ambitious. It aims to help bridge the gap between the recent rhetoric on greater private sector engagement, and what it means in practice to pursue 'inclusive' peacebuilding in relation to business actors. It sketches some issues worthy of further exploration and research and seeks to foster robust debate by offering a view on what may be the top three problems where 'the private sector' meets 'inclusive peacebuilding':

**Conceptual clarity:** What is meant by 'the private sector', and what activities are envisaged in promoting its greater engagement? This represents a call for greater conceptual and terminological precision in the emerging 'business for peace' field.

**Mindsets and mandates:** Has the private sector been a neglected stakeholder in peacebuilding; why, and how is this changing? This highlights the need to understand blind spots towards business, and for an empirical knowledge base to help future peacebuilders consider where entry points might exist to stimulate or harness peace-enhancing business activities.

**Policy parameters:** What is an appropriate role for business in peacebuilding, especially in going beyond just practising conflict-sensitive (‘do no harm’) approaches? This is a call for public authorities to take a clear-eyed, proper, but also pragmatic position on including business in peacebuilding strategies. It is also a call for greater understanding among policymakers of how private sector people think, and how to influence the working cultures of business counterparts. Standard vocabulary and concepts familiar to development officials may need appropriate translation to ensure business attention.

These three issues, which are explored further in the first section of this article, are related: until clearer conceptual understandings and more robust, reassuring policy parameters exist, those in the public or civic sectors will probably remain both ill-equipped for and ambivalent about engaging business appropriately in fulfilling peacebuilding mandates. The article’s final section proposes some priority practical actions.

### The private sector and the Sustainable Development Goals

*‘...Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development...’* Goal 16

‘Inclusivity’ is central to just and sustainable development, and is expressly mentioned in many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. ‘Peace’ is only expressly mentioned in one (Goal 16), and the private sector is mentioned only once in terms of promoting partnerships (Goal 17, target 17.17).

However, the SDGs reveal and reflect multiple links between sustainable development and the prospects for peace, from reducing inequality to combating desertification. Meanwhile, the private sector is clearly heavily involved or interested in many SDG issues, from ‘sustainable consumption and production patterns’ (Goal 12) to ‘industrial innovation’ and ‘job creation’ (Goals 8 and 9).

Importantly, the SDG-related role and impact of the private sector is not limited to what might be done through public-private partnerships for development. Explicit cross-sector partnering on peacebuilding may be difficult. Still, business actors can contribute to conflict-prevention and to building peace in various ways without necessarily entering the more formal partnerships envisaged in some SDG implementation debates. Policymakers can also promote and reinforce private sector peace-related contributions, dialogue and collaboration in ways that do not require partnership structures to exist.



## Towards conceptual clarity

### *Identifying 'the private sector'*

This paper does not seek to elaborate generic concepts of inclusivity, nor dwell on definitions<sup>2</sup>. However, current debates on the private sector and peacebuilding would be significantly advanced through greater attention being paid to who or what is meant by 'the private sector'. Here policymakers and researchers display insufficient awareness of the huge diversity both between and within various businesses and financial sector. Until peacebuilding organisations and authorities better understand the business and financial map (generally and in specific political economies), they will be ill-equipped to identify and pursue opportunities to harness legitimate private sector contributions.

Even within the same industry sub-sector, different companies vary significantly in size, form of incorporation and financing, national 'origin', and so on. They will generally differ in the inclination of their leadership towards peace, organisational cultures, resources and capacities, incentives, timeframes, risk appetites and levels of legitimacy. A small, agile, unlisted, early-entry, light-footprint gas exploration firm that never develops any concessions will have a very different peacebuilding profile from that of a multinational energy company with multi-decade, multi-billion dollar investment and operation horizons.



This debate also often omits informal economic actors and increasingly significant state-owned enterprises that are major for-profit actors, even if not 'private' as such. Analysis often focuses on particular physical sites rather than complex supply chains, or on Western branded and listed firms. There is a tendency to focus on micro-level impacts (for example of an agribusiness plantation) rather than on macro-level structural features of particular global industries, which may have far more significance for peace prospects (for example, global staple food commodities trading-houses). Some current debates and organisational mindsets in this field tend to valorise and romanticise local small or medium-scale enterprises while displaying automatic distrust of multinational firms. These value-laden assumptions are no substitute for objective analysis of the peacebuilding impact or potential of various entities<sup>3</sup>.

### 'Business for Peace' and other initiatives

Historically, there has been insufficient attention paid to the role and interests of business actors in peacebuilding dialogues and processes<sup>4</sup>. There is growing discourse among policymakers on engaging business in peaceful development. Notable examples include:

2011: The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights outline the special responsibilities of investors in fragile and conflict-affected zones.

2012: For the first time, the UN Secretary-General's annual report on peacebuilding expressly calls for engagement with the private sector in these processes.

2013: The UN Global Compact launches its 'Business for Peace' initiative, with its inaugural global event following in September 2014.

2014: The first Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation summit puts emphasis on the vital role of the private sector as a player and partner.

2015: The seventh 'Business for Peace Awards' in Oslo reflects growing business leadership on conflict transformation, also evident at the Economic Forum in Davos and at other events.

This greater attention begs the question of whether there is a risk of overstating the private sector's role in peacebuilding. In this scenario we would shift from what for a long time has been a blind spot in relation to business as a stakeholder, towards wrongly seeing the private sector as some kind of panacea for addressing conflict through development. Business interest in peacebuilding cannot be assumed: more analysis is needed, for example, on the peace-related incentives, interests and capacities of business actors and sectors – generally and in the political economy of specific contexts.



**BUSINESS  
FOR PEACE  
FOUNDATION**

### *A framework for 'business and peace'*

Currently, and despite the new attention to 'business for peace' ideas, there is no clear framework for analysing the private sector's role in or impact on peacebuilding. Current debates often offer little to advance understanding about how business players can enhance peacebuilding, what counts as positive impact, and how to measure or attribute this to business actors and activities. Sometimes no distinction is made between peacemaking and peacebuilding impacts or contributions, although it may be more controversial to conceive of the private sector being involved in peace negotiations than in post-settlement recovery and reconciliation. In practical terms, the lack of rigour in much 'business for peace' debate leaves policymakers and researchers without analytical concepts to help assess whether, when and how to engage with business as a peacebuilding stakeholder, which businesses to engage with, or how to assess private-sector contributions.

A basic framework could distinguish four different ways in which the private sector can contribute to peacebuilding:

- direct versus indirect impacts or contributions;
- explicit, overt versus unintended impacts/contributions;
- unilateral (single enterprise or site) versus joint or pan-business initiatives; and
- local versus national-level, regional or international-level peace contributions.

Various combinations of these four dimensions can exist, and may contain contradictions. For instance, a major extractive sector project may directly improve conditions for peacebuilding in its local area of operations, yet indirectly its revenues at the national level may help to support an aggressive, oppressive state security apparatus. This reality raises complex questions about whether and how one measures the 'net' peace impact of a firm or project or sector. When that impact is measured will also matter: a project that initially proves 'peace-positive' may trigger violence years later, and vice versa<sup>6</sup>.



### **Historic examples of business inclusion in peacebuilding**

The growing focus on ‘business for peace’ narratives (outlined in the previous box) can obscure how the inclusion of business voices in fairly overt peacemaking and peacebuilding is not a new phenomenon<sup>7</sup>. In fact, an International Chamber of Commerce representative was included in the negotiations that resulted in the 1948 United Nations Charter. Historically, there are many examples of business people and private sector umbrella groups encouraging or facilitating peacebuilding links. Sometimes this has involved business-to-business links across social divides, with an indirect effect on high-level peace talks (for example, in Cyprus). In other places, business groups have directly lobbied high-level political actors to encourage them to ‘come to the table’: in Northern Ireland, the Chamber of Commerce played a brokering and supportive role in the 1990s; in late apartheid-era South Africa, big business became closely involved in encouraging inter-party dialogue towards a peaceful democratic transition.

In order to foster inclusivity in seeking sustainable peace in future scenarios, however, more research is needed to understand the actual or potential influence that business actors have had on peace dynamics in past cases. For example, what precise roles have foreign oil firms played in encouraging peace dialogue in South Sudan’s recent civil war? Did the fact that these firms were state-owned affect whether or how they accepted or played any such role, or how their peace interventions were perceived?

### **Mindsets and mandates: issues in an emerging ‘field’**

As the policy, practice and research around including business actors in peacebuilding strategies mature, there are a number of substantive questions and issues that require more rigorous attention. A few are listed below with the intention to stimulate debate:

#### ***The politics of business***

The highly political nature of both peacebuilding and business activities are often under-recognised. The notion that ‘peacebuilding is politics’ explains the private sector’s wariness of any overt role, but the issue goes deeper. Much current debate posits ‘businesspeople’ and ‘peacebuilders’ as distinct groups, one with economic interests and motivations, and the other with social and political ones. The assumption is that there is a need to help them engage more.

This is problematic because it obscures the fact that in any one setting the major business players may also be the most significant political actors, or be closely aligned. On the other hand, some public-sector actors see business relationships as so fraught with risk that they avoid engaging. It is not necessarily less political to engage regularly, as peacebuilders routinely do, with civil society groups, political parties, trade unions and others. The question here is: what is it about the for-profit factor that makes engaging with business any more difficult, risky or political than engaging with civil society or local political parties?

### *Assumptions about investment and peace*

Some current policy approaches assume that if only business could be attracted to invest in fragile states, peaceful development would follow. What is the relationship between promoting new or greater business activity and peacebuilding success, especially in highly divided or unequal societies? What assumptions exist about 'peace and prosperity' being mutually reinforcing? Does reducing unemployment necessarily reduce conflict risk? Many donor and multilateral agencies tend to see investment-promotion, including in natural resources, as the key to helping fragile, conflict-affected or transitional societies (such as those in Myanmar or Afghanistan) to reach a stable, self-funded, job-rich development path. It is true that economic recovery plays a key role in sustaining political settlements, and private sector investment (local, foreign and diaspora) may be critical for economic recovery<sup>8</sup>. However, some related assumptions require unpacking. This is because new projects, revenue streams or economic growth patterns could just as easily exacerbate conflict risk as reduce it; youth job-creation may not necessarily improve peace prospects; new resource developments could trigger conflict rather than bring divided societies together, and so on. Indicators measuring business confidence, investment or growth will not necessarily be useful indicators of peacebuilding progress.



Peace symbol arranged from pennies.

### *Linking mandates and mindsets*

Organisational leadership and messaging on including business in peacebuilding strategies are key to practical programming efforts. 'Mandates' here refers not just to formal institutional frameworks but also to the creation of permissive policy environments for innovation in engaging business in promoting 'peaceful and inclusive' societies (SDG 16). As the final section of this paper sets out, internal postures adopted within donor, development and humanitarian agencies constitute a large part of the challenge in identifying and exploiting opportunities to harness business contributions to promoting sustainable peace.

More research is needed to understand why the enthusiasm at the policy leadership level does not appear to be matched by staff-level practitioners. Why is there residual ambivalence about business as a peacebuilding stakeholder or partner? In what ways is this caution unreasonable and why is it understandable? One necessary step in shifting ambivalent mindsets is to adapt formal organisational mandates to ensure decision-makers feel assured in the perceived risky process of seeking out and engaging the private sector. However, formal mandate adjustment is not enough. Perhaps easily accessible and reassuring ‘success stories’ of private sector contributions to peacebuilding are needed.

### *Beyond a ‘do no harm’ approach?*

Some proponents of ‘business for peace’ initiatives posit a direct, intentional role for business actors in reinforcing peacebuilding both through operations-related efforts, including balanced hiring policies, and beyond standard business activities, such as engagement in reconciliation or dialogue. However, more applied policy research is needed to define appropriate actions for private sector actors in taking on a more overt or express role in promoting peacebuilding objectives. We know far more about the less ambitious (and still difficult) approach of being a responsible, conflict sensitive employer and investor<sup>9</sup>. In what circumstances might business go further, how can policy stimulate this, and when is it appropriate to do so?

### *Understanding business incentives*

Even if a peacebuilding agency or authority adopts an internal policy on engagement with business actors to foster investment or activities in support of peace efforts, this is only part of the equation. What makes business response to such outreach likely, and likely to be sustained? More careful analysis is needed, informed by management theory beyond peace and conflict studies, on the reasons that the private sector might be inclined or incentivised to invest in fragile areas, or to partner in peacebuilding initiatives. Policy-makers arguably lack thorough understanding of what drives business decision-making in fragile or peacebuilding contexts. This inhibits efforts to engage business, but also obscures opportunities for innovation, such as specially tailored financial responses to fragile states, from political risk guarantees to the issue of social impact or diaspora bonds. Policy-makers’ lack of familiarity with commercial considerations also affects their ability to help financial services firms, for example, to lobby against security-related blanket bans on remittances to fragile states.

### *Balancing the state, investors and communities*

As noted, a business can help to build local peace while unwittingly contributing to national conditions that are contrary to the overall greater quality or quantity of peace. External actors (donors and others) often face tensions between support for centralised state institutions and the pursuit of

localised community-oriented objectives. This dynamic can become more complex where, for example, large, foreign-owned, resource-impacting projects are at stake. More research is needed on how peacebuilding strategies can incorporate responsible businesses' engagement in ways that are palatable to local and national authorities, and inclusive of legitimate community perspectives. One reason for the ambivalence of policy-makers, as discussed above, is the sensitivity of prioritising among partners from various foreign, diaspora and local businesses. Balancing support to formal sector firms with informal enterprises will often be a challenge, although much scope exists for innovation in linking the success and maturity of informal businesses with the supply and servicing needs of larger and more formal ones, in ways that can help build social cohesion.

### *Not neglecting the macro perspective*

Most attention so far in this field has been on localised peace-related impacts (positive or negative) of particular projects and investments. Insufficient research has focused on how structural factors in the global political economy of investment, trade and financial flows might reinforce or undermine peacebuilding efforts. Trading in staple commodities by private sector actors in global markets, for example, may be far more significant to overall peacebuilding prospects than micro-level adjustments to business practices around community relations. Such forces are very hard to track or influence. Global market shifts traceable to dominant commodity market players could undermine any localised efforts involving business. Such macro shifts could also provide prevailing background conditions conducive to consolidating peace despite the existence of localised challenges at the micro level. The challenge is that such forces are very hard to track or influence.

### *Linking the private sector, taxation and capital flows*

'Business and peace' inquiries can be cast too narrowly, overlooking structural issues. Moreover, few scholars and practitioners in this area are literate in the technical but vital issues of development financing such as tax policy options in high-risk investment settings. These issues affecting the national political economy are harder for individual private sector actors to influence positively but may be far more critical than whether firms adopt community-friendly outreach or social investment policies. Thus, a focus on what individual, responsible companies can do to promote peace communities can obscure attention to more fundamental issues of the private sector's role in and impact on the state's longer-term development strategy. Peace prospects are closely linked to the state's legitimacy and effectiveness in providing social services and infrastructure in inclusive ways. Research and policy discussions on 'inclusive peacebuilding and the private sector' must factor in how private investment and enterprise relate to the state's capacity to raise and spend revenue in ways that are transparent, that promote social harmony and reduce conflict risk.

There is growing recognition of the impacts of corporate tax minimisation or evasion on the capacity of poorer states' for self-financed development. In parallel, larger companies in fragile and post-conflict countries are facing pressure to account for how revenues are levied and used by host governments and influence state spending of revenues related to major development projects. Future work on 'inclusivity' in peacebuilding as it relates to the private sector should cover what private sector actors of all sizes can reasonably be expected to do to ensure that their activities support emergent taxation, regulatory and budgetary capacity of the post-conflict or fragile state of host countries. External expertise on facilitating private investment that could underpin a viable welfare state may, for example, be just as important to long-term peace prospects as external expertise on drafting new human rights laws. Yet, in terms of their staffing profiles post-conflict peacebuilding missions and agencies have focused heavily on the latter sort of effort (building public institutions) and generally have little or no expertise on how to work with business.

### *Business, peacebuilding and cross-cutting themes*

There is currently only a weak or incidental body of empirical and conceptual work linking the discourse on private sector engagement in peacebuilding to cross-cutting developmental themes such as gender, green growth, HIV/AIDS or youth empowerment. In particular, more work is needed to explore experiences of women in the private sector from participating in peacebuilding processes, and positive or negative impact of business activity during peacebuilding periods on women. Could future attempts at public-private cooperation on cross-cutting themes, such as women's safety in and around the business workplace in fragile states, serve a secondary function in also providing insights into the generic issues that help or hinder cross-sector partnering on issues of development and peacebuilding?



## *Mapping a research and evaluation agenda*

As noted in the first section, more work is needed on how one might credibly define, measure and attribute the positive peacebuilding impact of the private sector, generally and in particular cases. These methodological issues are common to all peacebuilding efforts<sup>10</sup>. In particular, caution is required, because ‘peace’ and ‘stability’ are not the same thing. Investors might be content with some forms of undemocratic stability that do not qualify as ‘positive’ peace. Policy-makers may be challenged by the inertia of investors towards efforts to transform stability into more inclusive and democratic peace?

## **Policy parameters: postures towards business**

The following are three practical issues that policy-makers and practitioners might consider as priorities in extending ‘inclusive peacebuilding’ notions to the private sector. Two are internal organisational exercises: the other involves external engagement:

**Resolving mandates on business:** Donor, government and civic agencies should spend time developing a generic, ‘principled but pragmatic’, internal policy on how they see private sector engagement relative to their peacebuilding mandates, and how, when and with whom they will engage. In addition to formal policy amendments, this will require a shift in organisational culture, along with leadership in reassuring both business executives and policy-makers that it is appropriate to engage more closely and develop cooperative relationships even in fragile or post-conflict countries where the corruption risk is perceived as high.

**Mapping business interests in particular settings:** Agencies operating in peacebuilding contexts should make it standard to map business stakeholders as they do political and societal ones. Which private sector actors have a stake in peaceful development? What help in practice can they bring to peacebuilding in terms of ideas, insights, resources, etc.? What policy risks to engagement or partner-selection exist and how can these be mitigated? This internal due diligence exercise is a prerequisite for ‘inclusive’ engagement and outreach towards business.

**Explore dialogue in an appropriate way:** Peacebuilding practitioners are familiar with engaging with non-state and other potentially controversial actors during peacebuilding. Arguably, as noted, the risks are no different in developing relations with the private sector. Informed agencies can become innovative ones. They can take risks and begin to explore dialogic, information-sharing, collaborative links with the private sector in ways that may support peacebuilding and development objectives.



One general challenge facing those seeking to engage the private sector in the peacebuilding agenda is to widen awareness, debate and uptake beyond a relatively narrow circle of existing business leaders. This group is already persuaded of the alignment of public and private interests in peaceful and prosperous developmental paths, and is seeking action and influence. Looking beyond these leaders, what is involved in advancing ‘business for peace’ as a normative worldview adopted by business enterprises more generally? How can the business-peace nexus, which mainly involves public policy scholars and practitioners, be connected across disciplines with business studies and become mainstreamed in familiar corporate responsibility debates on how business can profit from improving its social impact?

## Conclusion

The private sector, comprised of incredibly diverse actors with varying interests and capacities, has been an under-appreciated stakeholder in peacebuilding. Development and peacebuilding initiatives should at least explore a greater role for the private sector in information-sharing, dialogue and strategy development, capacity-building, convening and other peacebuilding activities.

Formal public-private partnerships are not easy to build or sustain, but are also not the only avenue for engagement and collaboration. What is mainly required is a considered policy orientation, within organisations, towards exploring and maximising the role that the private sector can play in peacebuilding. Overt business engagement may be rare, but considerable scope still exists to engage various sectors and supply-chains in promoting conflict-sensitive procurement and other practices.

Three things are worth emphasising in future approaches. First, the private sector's members, roles and impacts, while diverse, are typically highly political in fragile states: this is not just a set of apolitical economic actors. Second, even if one adopts a proactive approach to engaging business actors, they may be unresponsive due to limited interest, skills, legitimacy, or risk aversion. Third, in fragile settings even conflict-sensitive investment projects can have unexpected consequences for peace. Thus, while inclusive peacebuilding processes ought to include business actors, caution is required in order to avoid making simplistic assumptions.

Unsurprisingly, much will depend on the context, including the historic role of business actors in the country's conflict dynamics. While 'inclusivity' should extend to the private sector, it is unreasonable to put faith in highly engaged 'business for peace' approaches as some sort of panacea for accelerating efforts to foster more peaceful and inclusive development.

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- <sup>1</sup> The contemporary debate can be viewed as having taken off with the 2000 publication of Jane Nelson's report, 'The Business of Peace' (London: International Alert).
- <sup>2</sup> See Development Dialogue Paper no. 13 (May 2015), 2-3. ([www.daghammarskjold.se/publication/local-perspectives-on-inclusive-peacebuilding-a-four-country-case-study/](http://www.daghammarskjold.se/publication/local-perspectives-on-inclusive-peacebuilding-a-four-country-case-study/))
- <sup>3</sup> Jolyon Ford, *Regulating Business for Peace* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Rob Bailey et al, 'Investing in Stability: can extractive sector development help build peace?' (London: Chatham House, 2015).
- <sup>6</sup> Bailey et al, 'Investing in Stability'.
- <sup>7</sup> In colonial times, some large firms engaged in both war-making and diplomacy/peace-making.
- <sup>8</sup> For one recent DFID overview, see Katie Macintosh and Joanna Buckley, 'Economic Development in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States: a topic guide' (Birmingham: GSDRC, 2015).
- <sup>9</sup> See, for example, Andreas Graff and Andrea Iff, 'Conflict-Sensitive Business Practices: review of instruments and guidelines' (Bern: Swisspeace, 2014).
- <sup>10</sup> Bailey et al, 'Investing in Stability'.

## Notes

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## Partner organisations

Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Program of the Lutheran Church in Liberia

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Heritage Institute for Policy Studies, Somalia

Ar Yone Oo Social Development Association, Burma/Myanmar

This *Development Dialogue* volume highlights some of the gaps between the recognition that peacebuilding requires long-term participation and engagement from a broad spectrum of society, and the experience on the ground where this is not happening. It identifies some of the practical challenges that arise when engaging multiple groups of local stakeholders. It also offers suggestions for the international community as it revises its peacebuilding institutions and policies about how to move from token engagement to genuine participation in supporting local efforts to build peace.

The volume features articles by academics and practitioners from various backgrounds, who explore key issues such as participation of women at all levels, the engagement of youth, the roles of religious and traditional leaders, the importance of supporting existing community structures and the potential positive contributions of the private sector. In addition, this volume adds to the increasingly loud call for the international community to enshrine the principle of inclusive local ownership and leadership in all its peacebuilding efforts.

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