



# THE BETTER PEACE TOOL

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*An open source guide offering practical steps  
for the effective inclusion of women peacebuilders  
and gender perspectives in mediation, conflict  
prevention, and peacemaking.*

*Helping to make the word and spirit of  
the UN Security Council Resolution 1325  
agenda a reality.*

**International Civil Society Action Network**

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## BETTER PEACE INITIATIVE

The Better Peace Initiative (BPI) was launched by the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) in 2014, to develop practical guidance on the inclusion of women peacebuilders in peacemaking, mediation processes and sustaining peace. Through research, convening, and diverse consultations, the project aims to move beyond the question of why inclusivity matters, to ask how it is being practiced – identifying ongoing barriers and effective strategies to overcome them.

Through the BPI, ICAN develops short animations, discussion guides, and trainings on gendered thematic topics that are commonly addressed in peace processes.

For more information on the Better Peace Initiative and related resources, visit [icanpeacework.org](https://icanpeacework.org), and follow [#betterpeace](https://twitter.com/betterpeace) on social media.

## PROJECT TEAM

The BPI is headed by Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, ICAN co-founder and Executive Director. Helena Grönberg manages the initiative. Project management for the Better Peace Tool book, research, and drafting support provided by Stephanie Breitsman, Madeline Koch and Andrea Ó Súilleabháin. The publication was designed and printed by DHM Media Group.

## CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary</b>	1
<b>Part I.</b>	3
<b>21st Century Diplomacy:</b>	
- Diplomacy Evolving	
- Shifting the Goalposts for Women	
- Tackling the Question of ‘How’ to Make Peace Processes Inclusive	
<b>Part II.</b>	29
<b>The Better Peace Tool:</b>	
A Guide to Inclusive Peace Processes and Negotiations	
<b>Section 1.</b>	32
<b>Common Barriers &amp; Innovative Solutions: New Precedents for Inclusive Peacemaking</b>	
- Peace Processes as Societal Transformation	
- Six Common Barriers and How to Overcome Them	
1. “We represent everyone.”	
2. “The mediator can’t do everything.”	
3. “Who are these women anyway?”	
4. “This doesn’t concern women.”	
5. “I’m here because of my own credentials.”	
6. “The exclusion of women is cultural.”	
<b>Section 2.</b>	49
<b>Four Guidance Areas for a Better Peace: Proactive Steps to Realize Inclusion</b>	
- Understand the Mediation Context	
- Give Political Support for Inclusivity	
- Provide Technical Support	
- Provide Logistical and Financial Support	
<b>Conclusion</b>	61
<b>Changing Practices &amp; Paradigms</b>	

## BOXES

<b>BOX 1. Added Value:</b> Civil Society in Peace Negotiations	15
<b>BOX 2. What the Women Say:</b> Participation and Security Council Resolution 1325	25
<b>BOX 3. Sample Criteria</b> for Identifying Civil Society to Include in Mediation	41
<b>BOX 4. Good Practices</b> in Selecting Civil Society Representatives	55

## ANNEXES

<b>Annex I.</b> UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security
<b>Annex II.</b> Partners and Organizations Consulted
<b>Annex III.</b> Useful Resources

## Executive Summary

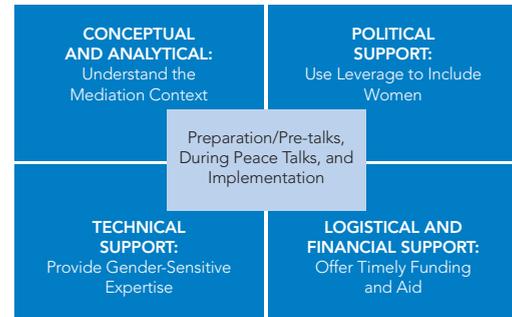
The proliferation of actors and growing complexity of contemporary wars demand new approaches to their prevention and resolution. The inclusion of state and non-state armed actors in peacemaking is necessary, but it is no longer sufficient if sustainable peace is the goal.

In even the most violent contexts a subset of civilians, often times women, find the courage to stand up, speak out, and struggle for peace in their country, armed with their values and convictions. They have no exit strategy, but they do have a vision of their societies rooted in social justice and equality. They are also an important source of practical experience about life in a war zone and knowledge of ground realities, from emerging security threats to effective means of preventing radicalization and making peace. Research findings affirm their contributions and the critical role they can play in peacebuilding.

This requires a paradigm shift away from a narrow notion of peace negotiations as security and political processes to acknowledging that they must be inclusive societal processes. It also requires changes in practice.

The Better Peace Tool addresses the 'how to' question by offering practical guidance for the effective inclusion of gender perspectives and women peacebuilders. Part I touches on the

history and evolution of peacemaking in modern times. Part II presents the Better Peace Tool in two sections: Section 1 addresses six common barriers to the inclusion of women peacebuilders. Section 2 provides a comprehensive four-part framework with attention to the conceptual shifts, political, technical, and logistical/financial support needed.



### Who are “women peacebuilders”?

“Women peacebuilders” refers to individuals and women-led organizations committed to non-violence; they are pro-peace talks and support human rights and women’s rights. Some advocate for justice, others work to address the impacts of conflict and/or to promote peace with a gender perspective. They are often the first to call for peace talks yet still remain marginalized. (See Box 3 on Sample Criteria for Identifying Civil Society, page 41-42.)

## Part I. 21st Century Diplomacy: From Power Sharing to Responsibility Sharing

Sanam Naraghi Anderlini

Throughout history, negotiations about war and peace have been exclusive processes largely in the domain of elite political and military actors. However, the past decades have brought significant changes in war and peacemaking. While the overall number of wars - especially inter-state wars - has declined in the past decade, the conflicts we do see are ever more complex. The end of the Cold War gave rise to intrastate and increasingly transnational conflicts.<sup>1</sup>

There has been a de facto 'democratization or diversification of violence,' with a proliferation of actors that includes international and national security forces, regional powers with proxies, non-state domestic armed groups, and transnational armed groups that recruit in one country for deployment in another.<sup>2</sup> Many pursue their own vision and agenda with little or no connections and accountability to grassroots communities. Some are quasi-criminal, self-financing entities that trade in narcotics, weapons, human beings,

or other lucrative resources; others are local militias, gangs, or political-militants benefiting from security vacuums. They build constituencies through extortion, service provision, and protection. Many have specific regressive ideologies pertaining to women. They impede women's access to education and public life, mete out strict punishment for transgressions, and overtly oppress and violate them through legal restrictions and physical abuse such as sexual slavery. The linkages between rebel groups, extremist movements, and organized crime are also becoming more transnational in cause and effect. The private sector also plays a key role, especially where natural resources are involved.

*For 2500 years, the military and political elite - mostly men - have decided on war and peace, but with the nature of war changing we need to change peacemaking, too.*

### **The Democratization and Evolution of Peacemaking**

Responding to these developments, often in the absence of effective state services or in the face of a predator state, non-state unarmed actors or civil society active at the community, national, and international levels have also emerged and gained momentum. From global and regional networks to

1 Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Malden: Polity, 2012, 3rd ed.); World Bank, *World Development Report 2011* (Washington, DC: 2011).

2 Institute for Economics and Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2014* (Sydney: 2014); Martin Griffiths and Teresa Whitfield, "Mediation 10 Years On: Challenges and Opportunities for Peacemaking," Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (2010).

emerging mass movements, ordinary citizens are taking a stand against violence and oppression – often at tremendous risk.<sup>3</sup>

Over the past two decades, the field of conflict resolution and transformation has developed in scholarship and practice. Governmental and especially non-governmental organizations have evolved their expertise in peacebuilding, mediation, and conflict resolution, working at formal Track I level diplomacy as well as more informal (but increasingly critical) Track II and community based initiatives.

There has also been an increase and diversification in actors involved in mediation and conflict resolution. Whereas during the Cold War years, the US and the Soviet Union were the primary backers of conflicting parties and had the leverage to promote peace, today there is competition among states and regional organizations to engage in mediation, host peace talks, and gain recognition for their efforts. More non-state actors ranging from corporations to religious organizations, international NGOs, and individuals are also active and involved in mediation and conflict resolution.<sup>4</sup>

Independent nonviolent and peace-oriented organizations have emerged nationally, too. In Latin America, after decades of armed liberation groups,

unarmed social movements are at the forefront of the demand for justice and rights. Across Africa, networks of peace and conflict resolution organizations play key roles in mitigating and preventing violence. The concept of conflict transformation – the ability to tackle conflict without resorting to violence – has been put into practice in multiple ways. In South Africa and Kenya, Peace Committees led by diverse representatives from local populations were trained in mitigating tensions and violence.<sup>5</sup> In Liberia, the Palava Huts have provided space for local disputes, including domestic violence, to be aired and resolved.<sup>6</sup> In Senegal, the Women’s Situation Room, led by the regional NGO Femmes Africa Solidarité, was key to limiting election-related violence.<sup>7</sup> Even in Syria, amidst the violence, nascent peace organizations are involved in local mediation, provide support to victims of warfare, and have developed capacities to advocate internationally.<sup>8</sup>

Although civil society organizations have fewer resources and may seem ‘weak’ relative to traditional notions of ‘hard power,’ they are nonetheless exhibiting important soft power capacities. They can access and engage a wide range of local actors

3 See Sarah E. Mendelson, “Why Governments Target Civil Society and What Can Be Done About It Response,” Center for Strategic and International Studies (April 2015).

4 See Peter Wallensteen and Isak Svensson, “Talking Peace: International Mediation in Armed Conflicts,” *Journal of Peace Research* (2014), vol. 51: no. 2.

5 See Andries Odendaal, *A Crucial Link: Local Peace Committees and National Peacebuilding*, United States Institute of Peace (2013).

6 See Ezekiel Pajibo, “Traditional Justice Mechanisms: The Liberian Case,” Institute for Democracy and Electoral Systems (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2008).

7 See “Women’s Situation Room,” UN Women West and Central Africa, <http://www.unwomenwestandcentralafrica.com/womens-situation-room.html>.

8 See Craig Charney, “Maybe We Can Reach A Solution: Syrian Perspectives on the Conflict and Local Initiatives for Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation,” *Syria Justice and Accountability Center*, <http://syrianperspectives2015.pressbooks.com/> (2015).

without the constraints that governments face, in part through new technologies and social media. They can focus on trust and confidence building across communities, inform and share experiences across regions, influence discourse, and support solution-oriented strategies. In the face of rising extremist rhetoric, they maintain and sustain the space for plurality and coexistence.

### ***Diplomacy Evolving: Pragmatic Responses to New Realities***

Faced with these realities, the international diplomatic community has also adapted its practices. A critical development has been the increasing willingness of states and multilateral institutions to acknowledge and engage directly with non-state armed actors. In the early 1990s, interactions with non-state armed actors (such as RENAMO in Mozambique, the RUF/SL in Sierra Leone, or the FMLN in El Salvador) was challenging for the UN and regional state-based organizations. There was—and still is in some quarters—fear that such practices challenge the core of the UN system: the principle of non-interference and respect for state sovereignty. There were debates and concerns about legitimizing such groups or ‘negotiating with terrorists.’

Nevertheless, and despite the stringent anti-terrorism policies and sanctions of the past decade, pragmatism won the day. High-level actors recognize that to end the violence in an ongoing internal conflict, there is often little choice but to engage armed actors – be they state or non-state, including those on the international terrorist list. In some instances, this step was prompted by the demise and withdrawal of Soviet support from left-wing armed movements. In the 1990s, for example, such groups in Latin America and Africa entered into negotiations. Universal human rights norms have also played an important role, by providing a framework in which the demands and grievances of many non-state groups, particularly those vying for self-determination, could be considered legitimate.

In addition to engaging non-state armed groups, the international community also began to provide fundamental support to help ‘even the playing field’ in negotiations. Nowadays, the UN and many governments involved in mediation efforts offer technical assistance, security guarantees, logistical, and even financial support to enable and encourage non-state armed actors to participate in peace talks. The interest is mutual. Even non-state groups that may inherently mistrust the UN as a state-based organization seek engagement with UN envoys. While it seems self-evident now, the fact that member states permit UN envoys to engage non-state opposition and armed groups is a critical but recent evolution.

The growing collaboration between governments and multilateral organizations on the one hand, and international non-governmental mediation and peacebuilding organizations on the other, is also a recent development. The Carter Center was among the first organizations in this arena. The United Nations, and governments including Norway, Finland, Switzerland, and others, regularly partner with INGOs such as the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue, Swisspeace, and Crisis Management Initiative (CMI). Many pioneering organizations such as the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), the West African Network for Peace (WANEP) in Africa and SERAPAZ in Latin America also facilitate access to non-state groups and lead community peacebuilding efforts.

It has become evident to the international community—including UN envoys—that to avoid inadvertent errors, the mediators and the negotiating parties in a peace process need thematic or context-specific expertise. When agreements were made but implementation was impossible due to logistical realities (such as unrealistic timeframes for disarmament or elections), processes hit an impasse or failed.

*“Women who have not taken up arms in Syria are still a power of peace and symbol of peace; if these women and other civil society figures are not included, I don’t see peace in my country.”*

—Dr. Rim Turkmani,  
Astrophysicist and Co-Founder of Building the Syrian State

To address this weakness, in 2008, the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) established the Mediation Support Unit (MSU) to deepen and broaden the UN’s own capacities to engage in mediation processes. It formed the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisors to harness external expertise on issues that are typically at the heart of peace talks, such as power sharing, constitutions, security, and resources. By 2011, the team was extended to include mediation process design and gender and inclusivity experts.<sup>9</sup>

### ***A Normative Evolution: On-the-ground realities prompt a call for inclusion of women***

The past two decades have also witnessed important advances in international norms and laws related to peace and security. The UN Security Council’s adoption of Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (and the subsequent seven resolutions that frame the agenda, see Annex 1) was among the most groundbreaking developments. Driven from the ground up by the reality of women’s experiences of living in war and working for peace, this agenda recognizes the role and contributions of women to

<sup>9</sup> For the list of members of the 2015 Standby Team and their brief biographies, see <http://peacekeeper.un.org/mediation-support/stand-by-team>; for an evaluation of the Standby Team to date, see Antje Herrberg with John Packer and Miguel Varela, “The Evolution of the United Nations Standby Team of Mediation Experts in Context,” *Peace My Way* and *mediatEUr* (2015).

peacemaking and security, their right to inclusion in negotiations pertaining to war and peace, and the importance of addressing the different needs of women and men (i.e. gender sensitivity) in relief, recovery, and post conflict efforts.

*“If war is the industry of men, let peace be the industry of women.”*

– Amal Basha, *Chair of the Sisters’ Arab Forum for Human Rights & Member of the Yemen National Dialogue Conference (Yemen)*

For the advocates behind the resolution, the participation of women-led, peace-oriented civil society groups was a key motivating factor. This was expressed in the central message that “women build peace” and make critical contributions to preventing and resolving conflict. But in 2000, the UN Security Council was resistant to the term “civil society.” In the earlier resolutions, the text refers to “indigenous and local conflict resolution” and “women” generally. The evolution of attitudes and policy is evident in the changing nature of the language in subsequent resolutions. By 2008, when Resolution 1820 was adopted, not even the most vociferous opponents of the agenda on the Council opposed the reference to “civil society.” In subsequent texts—notably Resolutions 1889 and 2122—mentions of women in civil society became standard language.

Although the agenda is often perceived to be about women or women’s rights issues only, its power lies in

the fact that it formally requires and calls on the UN and international actors to engage with non-state conflict resolution efforts and actors. By not opening the door for military interventions, it challenges the notion that peacemaking is in the sole preserve of the state. Rather, the agenda creates an opportunity for the international community to legitimately engage national non-state actors who seek change without the use of arms. It is a means of making peace negotiations a societal process rather than a political and security-focused one.

Women peacebuilders tend to draw out the human face of war. They challenge the often-narrow concept of peace being negotiated in the process by demanding greater attention to the relief, recovery, and social justice aspects. In effect, the presence of women peacebuilders can tilt negotiations away from limited notions of cessation of hostilities and power-sharing to that of responsibility sharing for the victims and communities affected by war to build a more inclusive and democratic future.

*“Inclusion at the table is an exercise in inclusion in the post-conflict context. This model should inform and shape inclusive processes after negotiations are finished.”*

– Virginia Bouvier,  
*Senior Advisor for the United States Institute of Peace (USIP)*

The Resolution 1325 agenda continues to have a catalytic effect. Regional organizations including the European Union, African Union, and Organization of American States have similar resolutions. Over fifty countries now have national action plans that mandate inclusion of women in peacemaking and security related processes. In many conflict settings, women peacebuilders have lobbied for these plans, and harnessed the 1325 agenda to bolster their demands for inclusion in peace and political processes. Implementation remains patchy, in part because of the lack of resources and political will. But the plans and other efforts to localize the agenda are providing a platform for rooting the global norms at national levels. The agenda also paved the way for discussions of 'men, peace, and security' and 'youth, peace, and security' globally.

*“Any group that has been pushed aside or distanced from the field in fact has a lot of capabilities, enthusiasm, and faith in achieving change.”*

- Eshragh Thabit,  
Lawyer and Women's Rights Activist (Yemen)

Support for the peaceful mediation of disputes also gained strong support among UN member states with the adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution 65/283 (2011), co-sponsored by Turkey and Finland. The resolution also calls for greater inclusivity and women's participation specifically. In

line with the resolution and other operational and normative developments, the UN issued its first Guidance for Effective Mediation (2012). Based on consultations with mediators and practitioners globally, the document distills key lessons and highlights eight “mediation fundamentals...for an effective process,” as follows:<sup>10</sup>

1. Preparedness of the mediation team;
2. Impartiality towards the parties, but not necessarily neutrality, particularly as it pertains to universal human rights norms;
3. Coherence and coordination among the range of actors involved in mediation efforts;
4. Consent and willingness of the parties to negotiate in good faith;
5. National ownership of the process, the outcomes, and implementation of the agreements;
6. Consistency with international laws and normative frameworks;
7. Inclusivity of a broad cross section of conflicting parties and other stakeholders; and
8. Quality peace agreements that both resolve conflict and aim to prevent its reemergence.

<sup>10</sup> See *United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation* (2012), [peacemaker.un.org](http://peacemaker.un.org).

## BOX 1. ADDED VALUE: Women Peacebuilders and Civil Society in Peace Negotiations

*Research shows that in peace and mediation efforts, civil society actors have helped:*

- ✓ **Improve the durability of peace agreements.** Analysis of 83 peace agreements between 1989 and 2004 indicates that civil society participation lowers the chance of parties reneging on agreements (and thus increases sustainability of processes) by 64%.<sup>11</sup>
- ✓ **Act as a public watchdog.** Civil society can hold parties accountable and pressure them to reach an agreement through messaging and mobilization, rather than using delay tactics or resorting to violence as a negotiations strategy.
- ✓ **Monitor the process and agreements and foster public buy-in.** Civil society monitors the entire process and implementation of the agreement, documenting and disseminating

information to international actors and, most importantly, the public. By representing a wide array of civilians affected by the conflict, they play a critical role in influencing public opinion for or against the process and outcomes.

- ✓ **Raise issues critical to the broader population.** Belligerent parties often focus on their own immediate needs and access to power. Civil society can transform the substance of talks to address the underlying causes of conflict and better reflect broad public interests, priorities, and concerns. This can strengthen national ownership and buy-in as the public feels more invested in implementing and maintaining the signed agreement.
- ✓ **Provide opportunities to solve problems and create new approaches.** When civil society actors are involved, they often develop parallel or Track II processes, creating an opportunity to test out new ideas, conduct joint analysis, or contribute to changes in the political culture on both sides.

<sup>11</sup> Desirée Nilsson, "Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace," *International Interactions* (2009), vol. 38: no. 2, pp. 243–266.

- ✓ **Foster greater social cohesion and rejection of violence.** The broad inclusion of affected civilians through the facilitation of civil society helps produce social cohesion, an important ingredient in a lasting peace. It also limits public support for violent reactions if groups feel excluded from a process or the agreement it produced.
- ✓ **Provide critical technical input and information.** Civil society actors often have expertise in critical issues (such as victims' needs, resource sharing, civil and human rights) and/or localized knowledge that is essential to the process.
- ✓ **Make important substantive contributions to improving solutions and outcomes.** Civil society actors also have knowledge of past Track I and Track II peace processes. Though political actors may lack this knowledge, it is essential to inform the dynamics and substance of each round of talks.<sup>12</sup>

12 For more on the positive impact of women and civil society participation, see Thania Paffenholz, ed., *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2010); Alexander Ramsbotham and Achim Wennmann, eds., "Legitimacy and peace processes: From coercion to consent," *Conciliation Resources*, (2014), Accord 25; UN Women, "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections Between Presence and Influence," (2012); Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, *Women Building Peace* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2007); International Alert and Initiative for Inclusive Security, *Inclusive Security, Sustainable Peace* (Washington, DC: 2004).

13 See Henri Boshoff, Waldemar Vrey and George Rautenbach, "The Burundi Peace Process: From civil war to conditional peace," *Institute for Security Studies* (June 2012).

## *The Spectrum of Inclusivity: Perceptions and Definitions*

Linking inclusion to the efficacy of mediation processes is perhaps the most innovative concept highlighted by the UN guidance. While qualitative and quantitative evidence indicates that inclusive processes, especially those involving civil society, generate better outcomes and a greater chance of success, there is still debate, skepticism, and trepidation about the practical implications of inclusivity among mediation experts and international technocrats.

Some argue that inclusion of a wide range of actors makes processes too chaotic and complicated. But both precedents and research show that this is false. For example, seventeen armed groups and parties participated in the Burundi peace process;<sup>13</sup> eight political parties participated in Nepal.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, a number of religious and community leaders contributed to the Somali peace process.<sup>15</sup>

However, calls for "inclusivity" have also been a source of tension and confusion. By definition, the concept can be adopted and co-opted by all actors. At one end of the spectrum, inclusivity encompasses the range of armed groups that

13 See Henri Boshoff, Waldemar Vrey and George Rautenbach, "The Burundi Peace Process: From civil war to conditional peace," *Institute for Security Studies* (June 2012).

14 See Enrico D'Ambrogio "Nepal's Political Parties And The Difficult Road Towards A New Constitution" *European Parliamentary Research Service* (November 2014).

15 Ibrahim Ali Amber "Oker", "Community Peace Processes in south central Somalia," *Conciliation Resources* (2010), Accord 21.

may be active in a conflict setting, including those designated as ‘terrorists’ by the UN or individual states. Experienced mediators often argue that to be effective they must have the leeway to reach out and engage all actors—without the constraints of international politics. For example, the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda was long reviled, but both the Ugandan government and international community eventually acknowledged the need to attempt outreach and mediation.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, efforts to engage the Taliban in Afghanistan are still ongoing.<sup>17</sup>

*“When mediators have the will to engage and include women and civil society, they find a way.”*

- Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, ICAN Executive Director

At the other end of the spectrum, the inclusivity concept embraces non-state unarmed civil society entities that are active in conflict zones but typically marginalized. They range from minorities to women, youth, and other sectors of society. The past two decades have shown that women are often key actors and stakeholders in this arena. Some may act through pre-existing organizations, others emerge through popular movements or as first responders in humanitarian crises, and engage in community peacemaking and reconciliation efforts.

<sup>16</sup> See Joanna R. Quinn, “Getting to Peace: Negotiating with the LRA in Northern Uganda,” *Human Rights Review* (March 2009), vol. 10: no. 1, pp. 55-71.

<sup>17</sup> See Sean Kane, “Talking with the Taliban: Should the Afghan Constitution Be a Point of Negotiation?,” *United States Institute of Peace Special Report* (January 2015).

*“Mandela briefed us in Security Council and said men weren’t willing to involve women. In the evening, he would sit and listen to [the women] and in the morning he suggested [their points] as if they were his ideas, and the men loved them. Eventually, he told [the men] these were women’s points, not his . . . that is how he brought women in to the final two rounds.”*

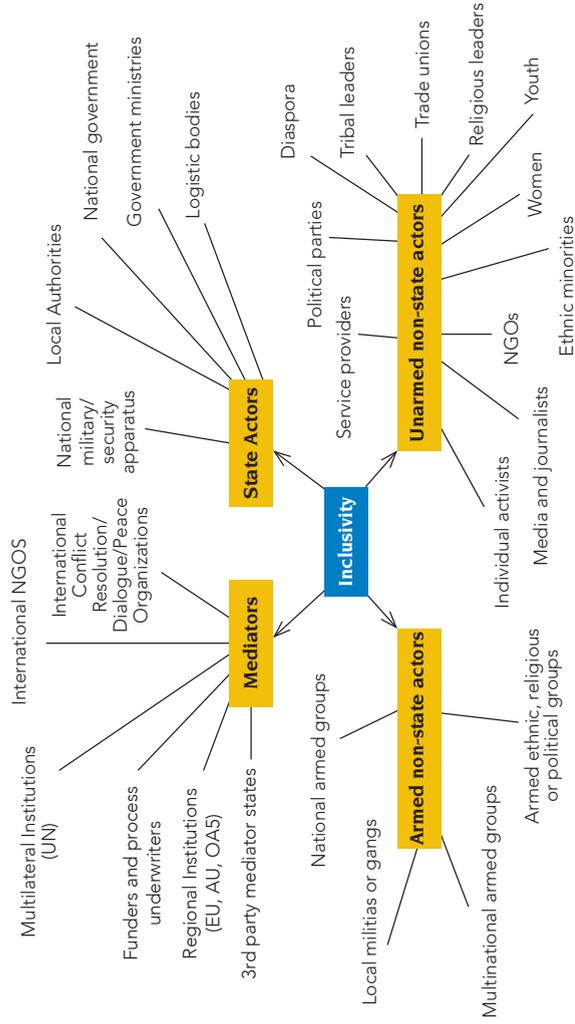
- Anwarul Chowdhury,  
Former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations

In between armed grounds and unarmed civil society, there are a variety of different actors and entities, ranging from governmental bodies to political parties and their proxies, traditional leaders, the business community, diaspora groups, and trade and professional organizations.

The chart on page 21 represents a partial mapping of actors involved, detailing potential mediators, negotiators, and other groups to include.

In the past 20 years, there has been some progress on the inclusion of non-state unarmed actors. In the 1990s in Guatemala, the church spearheaded the formation of the civil society forum that brought together indigenous groups, women’s organizations, trade union representatives, and others to inform and influence the UN-sponsored peace talks.<sup>18</sup> More recently, the UN and others have made concerted efforts to include religious and tribal leaders in peace talks (as in Somalia and Iraq).

<sup>18</sup> See “From Civil War to Civil Society: The Transition from War to Peace in Guatemala and Liberia,” *The World Bank and The Carter Center* (June 1997).



International actors including the United States, the EU, and the UN have also given recognition to diaspora and exiled individuals and groups, notably in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria. Regardless of their standing in their own societies, the international community has acknowledged them as legitimate leaders and opposition figures with a right to participate in peace and transition processes.<sup>19</sup>

Emerging statistical analysis reinforces the empirical data<sup>20</sup> that the involvement of civil society in peace processes has no discernable negative impact on the outcomes. Indeed, it can reduce the chances of failure by up to 50%. Moreover, qualitative research demonstrates that strong women’s involvement in peace processes affects the substance and quality of talks and improves the chances of more sustainable agreements.<sup>21</sup>

### Shifting the Goalposts for Women

Paradoxically, despite their activism in every conflict, the empirical evidence of their contributions and the strong normative frameworks that have resulted, women (especially female peacebuilders) remain largely locked out of peace processes. They are the sector about whom the international community has spoken the most, yet done the least.

19 See Amanda Roth, “The Role of Diasporas in Conflict,” *Journal of International Affairs* (Spring-Summer 2015); Lisa Laakso and Petri Hautaniemi, *Diasporas, Development and Peacemaking in the Horn of Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2014).

20 Desirée Nilsson, “Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace,” *International Interactions: Empirical and Theoretical Research in International Relations* (2012), vol. 38: no. 2, pp. 243-266.

21 See O’Reilly, Ó Súilleabháin, and Paffenholz, “Reimagining Peacemaking,” *International Peace Institute* (June 2015); see also, Thania Paffenholz, “Results on Women and Gender from the ‘Broader Participation’ and ‘Civil Society And Peacebuilding’ Projects,” *Geneva: The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies’ Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding* (April 2015).

Mention of women's inclusion in peace processes often prompts international policy makers to raise questions that are rarely asked about other potential or actual participants. They are accused of being elitist or too grassroots-based. Their qualifications and their standing in their communities is questioned and there is skepticism

*“Women are almost never included in negotiations as a group without significant lobbying to mediators and negotiators; in contrast, other civil society constituencies such as religious groups are often deliberately included. When women are included as an organized constituency, and given the opportunity to influence a negotiation process, they bring important items onto the agenda, not limited to gender and women's issues. Moreover, women have never been shown to make a negative contribution in negotiations.”*

- Thania Paffenholz of the Broadening Participation Project at the Graduate Institute of Geneva

about their 'added value' or evidence of their contributions. In some instances, international actors make extraordinary demands of women peacemakers. For example, during the Geneva II Syrian Talks in 2014, a senior envoy asked if Syrian women could stop the violent extremist groups (as a means of demonstrating their credentials), a feat that no government to date has managed to solve.<sup>22</sup>

22 Author was present during the discussions between Syrian women peace activists and a senior governmental envoy, Geneva, Switzerland, January 2014.

There is also a persistent misperception that the demand for women's inclusion is being driven by western NGOs and that the normative framework

*“We cannot say that there are no women who are capable. There are quite a lot of women who are capable, and we cannot exclude more than half of the population in decision making.”*

- Betty Ogwaro, (South Sudan) Member of the mediation team between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan Government

is rooted in ideals instead of reality. This is compounded by often-false assumptions about the role and power of women in specific cultural contexts. For example, when the issue of Somali women's participation in the transition process was raised in 2011, many members of the diplomatic community claimed that Somalia was a conservative culture in which women had neither power nor influence. Yet Somali women were negotiating with Al Shabab for the release of hostages, opening of the airport, and provision of medical and humanitarian assistance.<sup>23</sup> Their positions within their communities and their clans aided them in negotiating with warlords, establishing and running camps to demobilize militiamen, and pressuring local elders to intervene.<sup>24</sup> Similarly in Afghanistan, women are regularly negotiating with the Taliban or involved in the political processes locally. Yet international actors continue to claim that the Taliban will not speak with women.

23 Raised in discussions between Somali women leaders at UN hosted meeting with Author (Nairobi: 2011).

24 See Faiza Jama, "Somali Women and Peacebuilding," Conciliation Resources (2010), Accord 21; Hudda Ibrahim, "Somali Women Mobilizing for Peace," *Somali Current* (January 2, 2015).

## BOX 2. WHAT THE WOMEN SAY: Participation and Security Council Resolution 1325

### *Selection of Key Findings*<sup>25</sup>

1. Many governments, UN staff and CSOs are **still unaware of, or misunderstand, the SCR 1325 agenda.**
2. **Governments and international mediators are not doing their job.** Inclusion of women's voices is not part of standard operating procedures of governments or mediators in peace processes.
3. **Serendipity, not systematization, still drives interventions that support women's participation.**
4. **Donors are not practicing what they preach.** There is a disconnect between their policies on UNSCR 1325 and actions, aid programs, and diplomatic interventions in conflict- settings.
5. **Entry to talks is still based on the "Who are you? Do you have any Army?"**

**criterion.** It seems women only qualify to participate if they are simultaneously prominent leaders with experience in high-level negotiations and grassroots activists with a large constituency. Even then, there are no guarantees. The qualification for armed actors is their capacity to wreak violence.

6. **Peace talks are not seeking a comprehensive peace.** Rather, they tend to focus on ceasefires, political arrangements, and conflict management that suits political elites.
7. Many governments and international actors **pay lip service to women's concerns** but are not supporting them in mainstream interventions.
8. **Capacity building for women is not directly linked to peace and security issues.** Even when there is training, they often do not prepare women adequately to tackle many of the key issues at hand such as governance and power sharing.

25 Sanam Anderlini and John Tirman, "What the Women Say: Participation and UNSCR 1325, A Case Study Assessment." MIT Center for International Studies/ICAN, October 2010.

## **Tackling the Question of 'How' to Make Peace Processes Inclusive**

Despite the significant evolution of mediation and conflict resolution practices, as well as normative understandings of inclusion at the highest levels, in many formal peace processes the resistance to and misunderstanding of women's inclusion still prevails. Most women peacebuilders are locked out of the peace processes that will determine the future of their countries. They find themselves challenged by barriers to entry, such as lack of political will among mediators and third party negotiators, faced with a higher bar of questions about their legitimacy and expertise, or ad hoc practices.

Recognizing this, the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) and partner organizations<sup>26</sup> brought together civil society, governments, and international organizations in June 2014 for the "Negotiating a Better Peace" Symposium. The forum moved beyond the question of why inclusivity matters to ask how it is being practiced. Participants discussed common challenges to inclusion, and possible solutions to these challenges as they arise in real-time processes.

Drawing on subsequent seminars, regional consultations, and interviews for the Better Peace Initiative, the **Better Peace Tool (BPT)** provided in

Part II addresses six common barriers to inclusion (Section 1), and offers a simple but comprehensive framework for ensuring more structured and systematic inclusion of **women peacebuilders** and **gender perspectives** in mediation and peacemaking processes (Section 2).

### **Who are "women peacebuilders"?**

"Women peacebuilders" refers to individuals and women-led organizations committed to non-violence; they are pro-peace talks and support human rights and women's rights. Some advocate for justice, others work to address the impacts of conflict and/or to promote peace with a gender perspective. They are often the first to call for peace talks yet still remain marginalized. (See Box 3 on Sample Criteria for Identifying Civil Society, page 41-42.)

## Part II.

### The Better Peace Tool: A Guide to Inclusive Peace Processes and Negotiations

There is a good deal of precedence regarding outreach and inclusion of women peacebuilders in mediation. Unfortunately, the actions are often ad hoc; funding may be provided, but logistical support is not, or there is rhetorical support for women's inclusion, but it is not backed with technical or financial support. Most often, there is an absence at the level of mapping peace actors and addressing the concept of the 'peace' being established in the process. The Better Peace Tool offers a simple framework to avoid the ad hoc practices, encourage a systematic and comprehensive approach at all stages of peace processes, and to improve the practice of peacemaking and mediation.

#### *What is the Better Peace Tool?*

The Better Peace Tool is an open source guide to help improve mediation with emphasis on the systematic and structured inclusion of:

- Non-violent and pro-peace and equality civil society organizations - especially **women peacebuilders**;

- **Gendered perspectives** in substantive issues of peace talks.

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Instead, the tool highlights necessary ingredients that must be adapted to each setting to ensure an effective process.

#### *Who is the tool for?*

The tool is primarily for third party governments, including multilateral organizations, national and international NGOs, negotiating parties, and others committed to:

1. Mediating a conflict or crisis;
2. Supporting, funding, or underwriting mediation;
3. Contributing to a sustainable resolution of the conflict, and mitigating the risk of a flawed process that could lead to renewed or greater violence;
4. Implementing the UNGA Resolution on Peaceful Mediation of Disputes;
5. Implementing the women, peace and security agenda (UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions); and
6. Advocating for and/or monitoring inclusion of civil society groups in peace processes and UNSCR 1325.

## Why does inclusivity matter?

Inclusion of civil society contributes to the legitimacy and sustainability of peace processes through:

- Increasing public buy-in and national ownership in the process, and reducing attempts by excluded groups to derail the process;
- Holding belligerent negotiating parties accountable to better balance sharing 'power' and 'responsibility' for their societies' futures;
- Encouraging greater political will among belligerent parties to end violence and resolve conflicts peacefully;
- Addressing critical humanitarian and human security issues;
- Providing alternative opportunities to solve problems;
- Expanding our collective understanding of the concepts and practice of peace and integrating the wisdom of peacebuilders; and
- Increasing the likelihood of commitment to implementing agreements reached.

## Section 1.

### Common Barriers & Innovative Solutions: New Precedents for Inclusive Peacemaking

#### *Peace Processes as Societal Transformation*

Peace and political transition processes have long focused on ending violence and resolving armed conflict. However, these processes also provide essential opportunities to transform states affected by conflict or crisis. They can and should lead to new institutions, constitutional reform, updated justice systems, new power structures, and relationships across societies that address the root causes and consequences of the conflict. As citizen movements around the world call for greater participation in governance, there is also a growing call to move beyond the short-term goals of peace processes—ending violence—to long-term objectives, such as sustainable peace and social transformation.

*“We want women at the table because they raise gender and ethnic issues, and address governance and social concerns. They keep the negotiators and implementers honest.”*

- Ambassador Don Steinberg,  
President and CEO of World Learning and Former US Envoy to Angola

The inclusion of women peacebuilders in peace processes is a crucial step toward a transformative approach to peacemaking. Yet it remains elusive due to the barriers explored below. The BPT proposes steps to overcome the following six barriers to inclusion:

**Barrier One:** “We represent everyone.” Conflict parties won’t accept women at the table.

**Barrier Two:** “The mediator can’t do everything,” or doesn’t consider inclusion of women a priority.

**Barrier Three:** “Who are these women anyway?” Questioning the legitimacy of women peacebuilders.

**Barrier Four:** “This doesn’t concern women.” Military and security issues are ‘technical’ and ‘not relevant’ to civil society.

**Barrier Five:** “I’m here because of my own credentials.” When women delegates say, “We don’t represent women.”

**Barrier Six:** “The exclusion of women is cultural,” and “the peace table isn’t the place to deal with gender equality.”

These barriers arise in each phase of the peace process—pictured right—and across the various thematic areas of negotiations.



**Barrier One:**  
***“We represent everyone.”***  
***Conflict parties won't accept women at the table.***

Experience and research show that belligerent parties are open to interaction with civil society actors, notably elders and religious leaders. But on the question of women, there is significant resistance across most contexts. While parties may claim that the exclusion of women is a ‘cultural’ matter, data suggests that it is universal and often steeped in sexist norms. Excuses for the exclusion of women range from “they are not qualified” to “it is not safe for them to travel”—even when women are living in war zones.

***How to overcome this barrier:***

1. Frame the inclusion of women as beneficial to the interests of belligerent parties, because (a) it increases their legitimacy by demonstrating care for their constituencies, and (b) it informs the substance of negotiations and improves their understanding of issues affecting ordinary people.
2. Encourage parties to appoint women with technical expertise and strong ties to women peacebuilders.
3. Provide gendered briefing papers on agenda topics, so all delegates can understand how women and men are affected by and respond to war.
4. Encourage inclusion of women parliamentarians or women from other governance structures.
5. Offer positive incentives, such as additional seats, to parties that include a critical mass of women.
6. Establish a minimum quota for women; if no women are appointed, these seats remain empty.
7. Facilitate the interaction of women peacebuilders with conflict parties to highlight issues affecting their communities and their work for peace.
8. Where women are included in delegations, engage them separately to provide technical support and connect them to women peacebuilders.
9. Encourage envoys to establish gender expert support teams of local women leaders to inform and advise the mediators and their teams.

In Colombia, two women were appointed to the government panel because of their technical expertise and knowledge; at the same time, they were open to engagement with women peacebuilders. Throughout the Colombian process, links between Track I and Track II processes encouraged women’s influence beyond the peace table. In 2013, for example, the Women and Peace Summit convened 449 women and produced six proposals for peace agreement implementation, which were later submitted to the negotiating groups.

**Barrier Two:**  
***“The mediator can’t do everything,”  
or doesn’t consider inclusion of  
women a priority.***

Given the urgency of ending violence, mediators often assume that women are not directly relevant at the early stages of mediation. Some worry that engaging women will complicate a delicate process, or “overload” the negotiation table, and increase the risk of failure. Even where they favor inclusion, “the mediator isn’t a god,” and cannot always persuade the parties to include women. But research shows their inclusion is a worthwhile goal. In many instances, women have been key players in enabling a ceasefire and creating the environment for talks to proceed.

***How to overcome this barrier:***

1. When appointing an envoy or mediator, ensure that the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 is in their mandate.
2. Reach out to third party actors who are committed to the inclusion of women (e.g. the Group of Friends of Women, Peace, and Security), and seek support to:
  - Informally raise inclusion with the mediator referring to normative obligations, women’s positive impact on effectiveness, and their experience in mediation processes elsewhere.
  - Facilitate or convene meetings of women peacebuilders’ and the envoy,

encouraging systematic interactions from the start of the process.

- Formally request the envoy to report on their interactions with women’s groups.
  - Ensure the mediation team includes an experienced gender/inclusion adviser from the start, through funding and monitoring the appointment.
3. Recall past envoys who engaged women and provide models for how inclusivity was achieved.
  4. Provide examples and quotes from other mediators and envoys about the benefits and positive experiences of including women peacebuilders in processes.
  5. Provide samples of gendered language in existing agreements related to different topics.
  6. Consult international organizations with women, peace, and security expertise and consult local women peacebuilders about how best to support them.

In 2014, then-UN Special Envoy Mary Robinson launched the Great Lakes Women’s Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, to promote women’s roles in implementing the peace agreement in the DRC and the region. The Platform funds women peacebuilders and links them to national and regional implementation committees—which largely exclude women in their formal membership.

**Barrier Three:**  
***“Who are these women anyway?”***  
***Questioning the legitimacy of women***  
***peacebuilders.***

Questioning the legitimacy of a group or individuals is a sure means of excluding them from the mediation process. On the inclusion of women, this ‘legitimacy’ question is often raised. They are framed as either ‘too grassroots’ or ‘too elite’—thus lacking the credibility and credentials to participate in peace talks. At the same time, other civil society groups, such as religious leaders or elders, are more likely to be included without facing these qualification hurdles.

However, the legitimacy of groups that bear arms and use violence is rarely questioned; because they can spoil the process through force, they are often invited to participate without question. This double standard risks incentivizing violence by rewarding perpetrators of conflict with a seat at the table, while overlooking women peacebuilders and other civil society actors committed to nonviolent conflict resolution.

***How to overcome this barrier:***

1. Research the history of women’s leadership for peace during the conflict, their past mobilization and gains, and their work in peacemaking, mediation, ceasefire negotiations, and forms of social and cultural change.

2. Rebuff arguments that claim women are ‘too elite’ or ‘too grassroots’ or unqualified by reflecting on and questioning the qualifications of men at the table.
3. Suggest a formula for an ‘inclusive enough’ process, with criteria for civil society inclusion based on core values, competencies, and constituencies. (See Box 3 on Sample Criteria for Identifying Civil Society.)
4. Support women’s efforts to conduct public consultations to develop a common manifesto for the process and agreed upon election or selection processes for their representation.

Though women played prominent roles in negotiating local ceasefires in Syria, they were largely excluded from UN-brokered peace talks in Geneva in early 2014. At the time, supportive third party governments leveraged their political influence to secure a meeting between women peacebuilders and the UN envoy to Syria. While the women representatives did not gain admittance to that round of talks, they benefitted from this early engagement with the formal process. The outside pressure to include women catalyzed more systematic interaction: today, outreach to Syrian women by Track I representatives has been more extensive than in other formal mediation processes.

### **BOX 3. SAMPLE CRITERIA for Identifying Civil Society to Include in Mediation**

In conflict settings, there are old and new civil society groups. For inclusion in mediation, a set of criteria is needed to identify which civil society organizations can contribute to peace talks. The following sample criteria were derived from consultations with international mediation experts and peace advocates globally.

#### ***Core values and commitments to:***

- Non-violence and peaceful resolution of the dispute;
- Human rights, women's rights, and peace;
- Gender sensitivity in security and governance issues;
- Political independence and/or non-partisanship;
- Representation/inclusion of diverse sectors such as women, youth, minorities, and marginalized populations.

#### ***Competencies in at least one of these areas:***

- Practical experience and gendered understanding of ground realities;
- Strong record of representing women/civil society;
- Provision of aid, early recovery, or alternative livelihoods;

- Access to armed groups and/or prevention of recruitment into militias;
- Disarmament/rehabilitation and citizen/community security;
- Experience in mediation/peacemaking—particularly among communities;
- Promotion of social cohesion and a culture of peace;
- Focus on justice and reconciliation issues and working with victims;
- Resource issues, including national resources and land rights, with an understanding of local communities and women's needs.

#### ***Nature of constituents:***

Organizations may vary in the depth and breadth of their constituency, but it is useful to include organizations that have:

- A connection to a constituency "on-the-ground";
- Feedback mechanisms to inform and hear from local communities including marginalized groups;
- Capacity to mobilize and influence public opinion;
- Diverse representation of women, youth, minority groups, and/or geographic/ethnic areas/religious communities.

#### **Barrier Four:**

***“This doesn’t concern women.”***

***Military and security issues are ‘technical’ and ‘not relevant’ to women peacebuilders.***

Some argue that women do not need to be included in peace negotiations because military and security issues are not relevant to their concerns. Conversely, there is a perception that so-called “women’s issues” are not relevant to the security-focused agenda. But this overlooks the key role that these issues play in conflict dynamics—from sexual violence to the security needs of civilians during ceasefires. When they are included in peace talks, women consistently broaden the set of issues to be discussed, raising short-term and long-term security and development issues. This ultimately helps push for a more comprehensive agreement and a more lasting peace.

#### ***How to overcome this barrier:***

1. Point out that the majority of topics women raise are security related, including knowledge of land-mined areas, threats, and security needs of civilians that armed actors may not raise.
2. Highlight women’s keen understanding of changing patterns of violence and their monitoring of risks; they are often more mobile in conflict settings and have valuable local knowledge to share.
3. Note that women are well connected to their communities and can serve as excellent members for ceasefire/monitoring teams.

4. Remember that women peacebuilders tend to be trusted in their communities; they can support perception surveys and collect valuable information on civilian opinions of security threats, ceasefires, and other matters.
5. Be aware that conflict-related sexual violence is often a key factor exacerbating conflict and making ceasefire agreements fragile; if addressed during peace talks, it can build confidence in the wider process, and limit harm if talks fail.

In October 2010, the Mindanao Peoples Caucus launched its all-women contingent of the Civilian Protection Component deployed to monitor ceasefire agreements. The initial 30 women came from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds from across the Philippines. Many had lobbied hard for greater attention to women’s war experiences and adherence to the UNSCR 1325. Aged between 20 and 62, they were deployed throughout the conflict affected areas of Mindanao with a clear mandate to monitor the safety of civilian communities, ensure that conflict parties respected the sanctity of places of worship, monitor the delivery of aid to local populations and IDPs, and deepen local ownership and buy-in for the peace process. While some military and religious leaders were initially skeptical of the women, community responses were positive. By virtue of their diversity, they bridge the divide between different warring communities, and because members of the group lived through war, they have deep compassion for and commitment to civilians and the willingness to engage the military and rebels constructively.

**Barrier Five:**  
***“I’m here because of my own credentials.”***  
***When women delegates say,***  
***“We don’t represent women.”***

Resistance to inclusivity can come not just from armed groups or state actors but from within civil society, causing tensions between women delegates or representatives and civil society groups. In some cases, women delegates try to disassociate themselves from women on the ground, fearing that their position at the table will be viewed as a token female placeholder rather than a result of their hard work and merit. It is important to remember that simply having a woman at the table does not automatically make her the representative of all women in her country or guarantee that she is linked to the peacebuilding community.

***How to overcome this barrier:***

1. Encourage women delegates to remain connected to women peacebuilders and civil society groups that supported their ascension.
2. Facilitate a code of conduct that ties women delegates to the groups that promoted them to leadership positions and advocated for their appointment. This semi-binding agreement would articulate their common mission for the peace process.

3. Offer support and guidance to women who are given seats at the table, and invest in individual and long-term training, even if it requires using creative measures to enable women to work in physically dangerous situations. Provide women with knowledge and skills in areas specifically relevant to the conflict. This will not only enhance the peace process, but will earn them greater credibility.
4. Provide strategic training on achieving influence in the talks; for example, women delegates should make an effort to bridge the gender divide and have male allies, regardless of position or seniority.

Women representatives have the potential to be great advocates for women’s rights and supporters of civil society voices, but need support and knowledge to be effective once they reach leadership positions. In current conflicts, this has played out very differently. In South Sudan, appointed women cut off ties with civil society and women’s groups and towed the government’s party line. However, in the Philippines, women negotiators on the government panel maintained very strong ties to women peacebuilders and civil society and linked their input into the peace talks and debates on the Bangsamoro transitional law.

**Barrier Six:**  
***“The exclusion of women is cultural,”  
and “the peace table isn’t the place to deal  
with gender equality.”***

If the exclusion of women from peace processes was a cultural phenomenon, then we would see significant differences between Colombia and Syria, Burma and Burundi—places that are very different from each other. Yet the exclusion of women from peacemaking is common to all these cases. It is a universal phenomenon, suggesting that other factors are relevant, notably that the peace table is a place where power is brokered and shared. Those who come to the table want to keep it limited. They neither want to share the power nor be accountable to alternative forces. At the same time, some argue that the peace table is no place to address sensitive cultural norms, either through women’s participation or through placing issues of gender equality on the agenda. But the assumption that women come to the table only to demand gender equality is false.

***How to overcome this barrier:***

1. Refute these claims by noting that the effects of war are women’s and men’s issues. In war zones, women peacebuilders often speak of the needs of their community, especially the threats facing men.

2. Note that women peacebuilders often raise critical issues relevant to everyone (e.g. resource sharing with a gender perspective, police reform, and security sector reform).
3. Convene women peacebuilders to inform and seek input about key agenda topics. Don’t just talk to them about gender issues and women’s needs.
4. Ask parties about differential experiences and needs of women and men in their constituencies in relation to each major topic on the agenda (land rights, demobilization, etc.).

Agreements reached at the peacetable set the blueprint for the future of an entire society including the women, minorities, and other groups. If these groups do not have representation at the table, they are at risk of having their future be ‘on’ the table and negotiated away. The Aceh Peace talks led to the rise of an Islamist force that has pushed a regressive agenda against women’s rights. Peace negotiated to benefit one group or sector of society cannot come at the cost of the lives of another sector, especially if they are half the population or more.

### CONCEPTUAL AND ANALYTICAL:

Understand the context, and analyze the conflict and purpose of peace talks with women peacebuilders.

### POLITICAL SUPPORT:

Push for the inclusion of women peacebuilders in mediation, key meetings, summits, and consultations.

Preparation/Pre-talks,  
During Peace Talks, and  
Implementation

### TECHNICAL SUPPORT:

Provide women peacebuilders access to gender-sensitive expertise on security, governance, natural resources, and other issues in the process.

### LOGISTICAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT:

Enable women's participation through assistance with travel, security and visas, and with timely funding.

## Section 2.

### Four Guidance Areas for a Better Peace: Proactive Steps to Realize Inclusion

#### *How and when to use this tool:*

It is easier and more effective to be inclusive as early as possible in a mediation effort, even before an official process begins, when actors and agendas are still fluid. But it is never too late.

At each stage of the process, there are four inter-related areas of support to act on simultaneously:

- Recognize different analyses, understandings of **context**, range of actors, and purposes of peace talks that local stakeholders may have;
- Give **political support** for inclusivity in formal and informal settings;
- Provide **technical support** and expertise to strengthen their negotiations skills and capacities to engage in substantive issues; and
- Provide timely **logistical and financial aid** to women peacebuilders.

The BPT's structured approach to effective inclusion highlights four areas of action to consider at each phase of the peace process:

## I. Understand the Mediation Context

1. Learn about drivers/causes of conflict and peace.
2. Ask about the differential impact of conflict on men and women, how they are responding, and local populations' vision for the future.

*“What is the definition of peace that the international community uses? How can there be a ‘peace’ process if the peace itself is not defined well?”*

- Dana B., Peace Activist (Syria)

3. Map actors, including existing or new civil society peace actors. Ask local civil society or the gender/inclusion expert in your institution for help.
4. Ask how women access and influence power publicly and privately so that outreach can be context-sensitive and will not disempower them.
5. Meet with women peacebuilders to request/commission their a) analysis of the gendered aspects of agenda topics, b) mapping of past efforts to engage women, and c) solutions to security, humanitarian, and other key issues.

6. Integrate women peacebuilders in the mediation strategy so they are not isolated from formal Track I processes.
7. Ensure outreach to women, marginalized communities, and civilians on all sides of the conflict, support multilateral and international efforts for broad-based consultations, and offer an all-female space if needed.

### Important to note:

- Don't just talk to women about “women's issues” – get their perspectives on all issues and invite them to attend and speak at thematic discussions.
- It is critical to seek security guarantees that neither states nor armed groups will attack, harass, imprison, or persecute women peacebuilders who attend peace talks, consultations, or preparatory meetings. They should be given protection, just as it is given to armed groups.

*“Women peacebuilders are doing the most dangerous work.”*

- Ambassador Don Steinberg,  
President and CEO of World Learning and Former US Envoy to Angola

## II. Give Political Support for Inclusivity

1. Include in the mediator's mandate the implementation of UNSCR 1325. Make the engagement of women and civil society a key criterion for selection.
2. Reference and demonstrate privately and publicly your institution's commitment to the UNGA Resolution on Peaceful Mediation of Disputes and the UNSCR 1325 agenda.
3. Commit to gender parity and expertise in your team (30% minimum quota for women in negotiating teams/delegations); seek out women peacebuilders for their expertise.
4. Share multiple inclusivity models/methods with all stakeholders and mediators and explain why they matter. Do not rely on one method.
5. Invite women peacebuilders to speak and participate in international preparatory, strategy, or implementation meetings/summits. Provide updates, support, and time for women to prepare.
6. Call for the inclusion of women peacebuilders as signatories to peace agreements – point to precedents in Liberia, Somalia, Northern Ireland.
7. Verify that gender sensitivity is included in the terms of reference of transition or implementation bodies; ensure quotas or other measures are in place for the effective inclusion of women.
8. Set up or host regular meetings for women peacebuilders with international missions, diplomatic teams, and envoys, including during the pre-talks and implementation phases.
9. Establish national thematic working groups for the implementation of agreements; include a '1325' group to monitor and ensure gender sensitivity, and assign its members to other thematic groups, as in Nepal in 2007.
10. Mitigate the risk of spoilers by sustaining and funding pro-peace women's groups to keep the focus on implementation and warn against negative developments after an agreement has been signed.

### Important to note:

- *If inviting elders such as religious or clan leaders to Track I or II talks, consult women peacebuilders about which leaders are credible, respected, and uphold human rights and equality values.*
- *Even if the scope for broadening participation in formal talks is limited, engage with women peacebuilders on a systematic, constant, and regular basis throughout the process.*
- *The humanitarian, security, and political costs of exclusive processes, which are more prone to failure, make inclusivity a common sense condition of political and financial support.*
- *All UN Security Council country visits should include meetings with civil society organizations and women peacebuilders to hear their views.*

Consider using your leverage to call for the inclusion of women. As Kåre Aas, Former Norwegian Ambassador to Afghanistan said, "If Norway is to bring Afghans together at the peace table, a precondition is that women are there." Due to this political support, women were included in the delegation.

#### **BOX 4. GOOD PRACTICES in Selecting Civil Society Representatives**

International actors often cite the problem of identifying civil society and women's representatives in peace processes as a major barrier to their inclusion. As indicated in Barrier Three, questions such as, 'Who are they?' 'How can we ensure effective representation?,' and the notion that 'If we invite one, we have to invite them all' have often resulted in the wholesale exclusion of civil society (especially women's groups) that are active and committed to ending conflict.

Ideally, local civil society groups would have the chance to convene and elect their own representatives, as they did in Guatemala and Northern Ireland. Open participation and advertised posts are also feasible, but in other cases these methods prove impossible.

This box builds on Box 3, "Sample criteria for identifying civil society groups," and presents good practices for selecting participants and representatives according to peace practitioners working globally:

- 1.** Conduct actor mapping using field assessments and trusted local and international contacts to verify authenticity/credibility.
- 2.** Develop selection criteria in consultation with local actors (see Box 3); top down approaches may lack legitimacy. Make them specific and achievable, and ensure gender sensitivity is among priorities.
- 3.** Reach out to non-traditional groups, especially global women, peace, and security networks for access to women peacebuilders.
- 4.** Avoid doing harm caused by a) inviting the same prominent individuals; b) limiting to 'English' speakers; c) not ensuring geographic/ethnic balance; and d) not consulting or explaining rationale for selection.
- 5.** Send invitations to organizations—not individuals—and ask them to select/elect their own representatives based on the issue at hand.
- 6.** Conduct parallel national consultations if possible, through which representatives could be identified.

7. Establish liaison and feedback loops to keep people informed even if time frame is short. Explain why everyone is not invited to each event.
8. Invite local civil society groups to international meetings based on their areas of expertise (e.g. relief organizations to humanitarian summits).
9. Respect the selection processes that civil society organizations have established, and do not override their decisions.

### **III. Provide Technical Support**

1. Ensure that technical advisors (e.g. UN Standby Team) and mediation leadership have a gendered understanding of their area of expertise by (a) making it a criteria during recruitment and as part of their mandate; (b) providing formal training; and (c) expecting a partnership with gender/inclusion advisors.
2. Commission gendered briefing papers for all substantive themes that could arise in peace talks. Consult with belligerent parties and with women peacebuilders in developing these papers.
3. Seek and appoint envoys who have a proven track record in engaging women peacebuilders and integrating a gender lens in substantive areas.
4. Appoint a dedicated senior gender/inclusion advisor who has a direct reporting line to the envoy and is a member of the political team.
5. Recommend the appointment of a neutral gender and inclusion advisor to the peace talks who would be responsible for informing all negotiating parties.

6. Provide women peacebuilders with capacity building on technical issues (e.g. governance structures, cessation of hostilities), including mediation and negotiation skills. Continue this so they can be implementers and monitors.
7. Facilitate coalition building among women peacebuilders without forcing them into one bloc. Work with UN Women and international NGOs to provide this support.

#### Important to note:

- *Mediators should be evaluated on how well they're implementing the UNSCR 1325 agenda across substantive areas of the peace process.*
- *Consider assigning a liaison officer (with public contact information) in the mediation team mandated to inform and respond to civil society and women peacebuilders enabling them to have regular and direct access to the mediator or envoy.*

Call for joint male-female co-mediators, to model inclusive leadership. The Kenya mediation process in 2008, led by Graça Machel and Kofi Annan, offers an important precedent.

#### IV. Provide Logistical and Financial Support

1. Provide timely and flexible financial support to local organizations for proactive peacemaking. If needed disburse funds via trusted INGOs with a track record in women, peace, and security issues.
2. Expedite and coordinate visa applications, logistics, and security support for women peacebuilders.

Consult with affected civil society to identify and address security concerns.

3. Ensure that women peacebuilders attending international events have relevant grounds passes and access to meeting spaces.
4. Provide stipends for women peacebuilders not just to go to the peace process but also to take care of families at home.
5. Provide interpretation at all meetings and translation of related materials, including technical preparatory documents, in local language(s).
6. Allocate long-term resources to make women peacebuilders' networks sustainable – especially during the implementation period when their deep technical knowledge and local expertise is critical in each sector.

## **Conclusion:** **Changing Practices & Paradigms**

Silencing the guns, stopping the bombs, and agreeing to end a war so that a genuine culture of peace can take root will always be difficult; but if left only in the hands of the minority who believe in violence as a pathway to power, wars and their root causes will perpetuate. While that vocal and violent minority is needed to end the fighting, we cannot afford to ignore the often silent, peaceful, but equally active majority.

Even in the midst of the most horrendous and complex conflicts such as Syria, Afghanistan, Sudan, or Burma, the majority of people persist in maintaining peace and normalcy in their own lives and families. In every setting, a small subset of civilians has the courage and wherewithal to stand up and work for peace for their community and country, armed with their values and convictions. They may have disparate views and voices, but by virtue of their courage, their commitment to ending violence, and their vision of societies rooted in social justice and equality, they are critical actors. The international community must recognize them as such, with the right to participate in negotiations in the future.

This requires a paradigm shift from a narrow notion of peace negotiations as security and political processes to acknowledging that they have to be societal processes, as well. Instead of the peace table being a venue for the division and sharing of power, it should be a space for the division and sharing of responsibility for rebuilding the society affected by war.

It is idealistic to assume that exclusive peace processes can bring sustainable peace in today's wars. The inclusion of civil society peacebuilders—men and women—is increasingly a necessity for the effective prevention, resolution, and transformation of contemporary conflicts. The Better Peace Tool offers the practical guidance and proactive steps to realize inclusion in practice.

*Annex I.*  
**UN Security Council Resolutions on Women,  
 Peace, and Security<sup>27</sup>**

Resolution/ Year	Focus
1325/2000	Acknowledges a link between women's experiences of conflict and the maintenance of peace and security; <b>urges women's leadership and equal participation</b> in conflict resolution and peacebuilding; requires gender mainstreaming for peace operations.
1820/2008	First resolution to recognize conflict-related sexual violence as a tactic of war; emphasizes the need to <b>increase women's roles in decision-making</b> on conflict prevention and resolution.
1888/2009	Strengthens tools to implement 1820, calls on Secretary-General to appoint a special representative on sexual violence in conflict; expresses concern regarding <b>lack of female mediators</b> .
1889/2009	Calls for further strengthening of <b>women's participation in peace processes</b> and the post conflict period,

Resolution/ Year	Focus
	as well as the development of indicators, monitoring and reporting to measure progress on Resolution 1325.
1960/2010	Provides an accountability system for sexual violence in conflict; encourages efforts to <b>increase the participation of women in formal peace processes</b> .
2106/2013	Provides operational guidance on addressing sexual violence and calls for the further deployment of Women Protection Advisers.
2122/2013	Calls on all parties to <b>peace talks to facilitate equal and full participation of women</b> in decision-making; aims to increase <b>women's participation in peacemaking</b> by increasing resources for women in conflict zones; acknowledges the critical contributions of <b>women's civil society</b> organizations.
2242/2015	Marks the 15th anniversary and reaffirms commitment to Resolution 1325; highlights the <b>role of women in countering violent extremism</b> , and addresses the differential impact of terrorism on the human rights of women and girls.

<sup>27</sup> Table adapted from Marie O'Reilly, Andrea Ó Súilleabháin, and Thania Paffenholz, "Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles in Peace Processes," International Peace Institute (June 2015).

## Annex II. Partners and Organizations Consulted

The Afghan Women's Network (AWN)	Mediation Support Network (MSN)
The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD)	Mobaderoon: Active Citizens in Syria Mujeres por la Paz
African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries (ALARIM)	Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa (NPI-Africa)
Athena Consortium	Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)
Berghof Foundation	Search for Common Ground (SFCG)
Casa de la Mujer	SERAPAZ
Center for Peace Mediation	Southeast Asian Conflict Studies Network (SEACSN)
Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD)	Swisspeace
Centre for Mediation in Africa (CMA)	Syrian Women's Initiative for Peace and Democracy (SWIPD)
Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS)	United Nations Department of Political Affairs (UNDPA)
Conciliation Resources (CR)	Members of the United Nations Standby Team of Mediation Advisors
Crisis Management Initiative (CMI)	United States Institute of Peace (USIP)
EVE Organization for Women Development	Women Engaged in Action on 1325 (WE Act 1325)
Folke Bernadotte Academy	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)
Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI)	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
Generation in Action	
Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP)	
Initiative on Quiet Diplomacy	
Institute for Inclusive Security (IIS)	
International Peace Institute (IPI)	

For a comprehensive list of partner organizations and consultations see [www.betterpeace toolkit.org](http://www.betterpeace toolkit.org)

## Annex III. Useful Resources

### *On women's participation and peacemaking:*

Radhika Coomaraswamy, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*. UN Women, 2015. <http://wps.unwomen.org>.

Marie O'Reilly, Andrea Ó Súilleabháin, and Thania Paffenholz, "Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles in Peace Processes." International Peace Institute, 2015.

Thania Paffenholz, Antonia Potter Prentice, Cate Buchanan, "Fresh Insights on the Quantity and Quality of Women's Inclusion in Peace Processes," CCDP Policy Brief, 2015.

Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections Between Presence and Influence," UN Women, 2012.

Christine Bell and Catherine O'Rourke, "Peace Agreements or 'Pieces of Paper'?: The Impact of UNSC Resolution 1325 on Peace Processes and their Agreements," *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 2010: Vol. 59, No. 4, pages 941–980.

Desirée Nilsson, "Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace," *International Interactions*, 2009: Vol. 38, No. 2, pages 243–266.

Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini, *Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why it Matters*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007.

### *On women, gender equality, and peaceful societies:*

*Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity*, World Bank, 2014.

Valerie Hudson, Bonnie Ballif-Spanvill, Mary Caprioli, and Chad F. Emmett, *Sex and World Peace*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

### *The following are examples of organizations that have expertise on women's participation and maintain networks of women peacebuilders:*

ICAN ([icanpeacework.org](http://icanpeacework.org)), the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders ([gnwp.org](http://gnwp.org)), the Institute for Inclusive Security ([inclusivesecurity.org](http://inclusivesecurity.org)), the Women Peacemaker's Program ([womenpeacemakersprogram.org](http://womenpeacemakersprogram.org)) and PeaceWomen ([peacewomen.org](http://peacewomen.org)).

Notes

## Reviews of the Better Peace Tool

*“This tool is highly relevant. It’s what we’ve needed for years.”*

- Scilla Elworthy, Peacebuilder and Founder of the Oxford Research Group

*“This report is very interesting...probably the best ever written.”*

Ambassador Kåre Aas, Norwegian Ambassador to the United States

*“Excellent piece of work that has benefited from a great deal of pragmatic research and wisdom.”*

- Youssef Mahmoud, Senior Adviser at the International Peace Institute

*“The BPT is outstanding...a wealth of good information, and a very accessible guide for practitioners...really the best comprehensive guide of its kind drawing on widespread evidence from across the geographic spectrum.”*

- Ambassador Don Steinberg,  
President and CEO of World Learning and Former US Envoy to Angola

## Why do we need the Better Peace Tool?

*“The risk of excluding civil society and women from a peace process is that there won’t be a peace process.”*

- Senator Mobina Jaffer, Canadian Senator and Former Canadian Envoy to Sudan

*“We need to question how we make peace. Talks to end fighting are not the same as what is needed to enable peace.”*

- Rosa Emilia Salamanca, the Executive Director of CIASE  
(Corporación de Investigación y Acción Social y Económica), Colombia



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