



Recognizing Women Peacebuilders:

OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK TO GUARANTEE THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN PEACEBUILDERS IN TRACK ONE PEACE PROCESSES

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In 2000 women peacebuilders mobilized to demand recognition and inclusion in peace and security processes, resulting in the adoption of United Nation Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security (WPS). The resolution called for “support to women’s local peace initiatives” and the participation of women in peace and security decision making. Twenty years on, there is some progress. Over 80 countries have national action plans committing to women’s inclusion; regional women mediators’ networks have emerged globally; a handful of women are being appointed to official delegations to peace talks; the United Nations has appointed gender advisors to its Mediation Standby Teams; and envoys have created Civil Society Support Rooms and Women’s Advisory Boards to accompany track one peace processes. While these models provide some space for engagement, they are by definition limited and do not guarantee direct and equal participation or representation of women peacebuilders in peace processes.

As research shows this exclusion has a direct negative impact on the outcomes and the sustainability of peace agreements.

To improve the outcomes of existing peace processes and to mark the 20th anniversary of the WPS agenda, governments, multilateral organizations and others engaged in the field of mediation and peacemaking need to change their standard practices. Here are 10 steps mediation teams and government supporting peace processes can take at each stage of the peace process to ensure inclusive and gender responsive processes, with a better chance of sustainable peace.

1. Support independent women peacebuilder delegations to take part in peace talks.

Precedence: At the Somali National Peace Conference in Arta, Djibouti (2000), the UN invited Somali women peacebuilders to observe the peace talks among the five clans all represented by men. The women united across clans as the “Sixth Clan,” referencing the clan-based design of the conference. They negotiated with the men to secure their seat at the table as an independent delegation and signatories to the agreement.

2. Design inclusive processes where women and other marginalized groups have fair representation.

Precedence: In facilitating the 2012-2014 Yemen National Dialogue Conference (NDC), the UN heeded the call for inclusivity and helped create a process that included political and tribal leaders alongside youth and women’s civil society movements. The NDC comprised 28% female participation. There was an all-woman delegation and a minimum 30% quota for women’s participation in the delegations of other parties. Women chaired three of the nine working groups and comprised 25% of the Consensus Committee.

3. Convene meetings early on, encouraging systematic interactions from the start of the process so relations are built:

- Between women peacebuilders and the envoy/ mediator; and,
- Between women peacebuilders and the negotiating parties.

Precedence: As common practice, Norwegian mediation teams meet with various stakeholders, including women, before an official process starts. Throughout the process they engage on issues like inclusion and rights, particularly with those that are likely to be the formal parties. A gendered conflict- and actor analysis is undertaken, and targeted support for relevant women’s peace organizations and WPS actors provided.

4. Invite women as official observers and convene the women to negotiate on the issues on the agenda, come up with negotiated solutions to share with armed actors and encourage them to adopt solutions.

Precedence: In Burundi, in 1999 Nelson Mandela (mediator), UNIFEM, and the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation supported an all-party women’s peace conference bringing together more than 50 women representatives from the 19 Burundian groups involved in the peace negotiations. The women discussed and agreed on gender specific demands including inclusion of a women’s charter in the Constitution, measures to ensure women’s security, women’s rights to land, inheritance and education, and an end to impunity for gender-based war crimes and domestic violence. Mandela subsequently presented the negotiated recommendations to the 19 negotiating parties, who accepted all requests.

5. Invite women peacebuilders to regularly speak to delegations about issues on the negotiation agenda, such as ceasefires, power/responsibility sharing, security sector reform etc, and what they expect to see coming out of the process.

Precedence: In 2002, in advance of the Sun City talks, UNIFEM assisted Congolese women to meet with women from South Africa, Guatemala and Uganda who had experience in peace negotiations. The women were later able to contribute substantively to the agenda of defense and security, political and judiciary, financial and economic, humanitarian, social and cultural, peace and reconciliation commissions and provide technical assistance to the Facilitator’s office in the last round of negotiations.

6. Provide gendered briefing papers on all thematic topics on the agenda, so delegates understand how women and men are affected by and respond to conflict, and what expertise the peacebuilders bring to the table.

Precedence: During the Colombia peace process, the UN’s Mediation Standby Team produced gendered briefing notes for the Norwegian envoy on each of the topics on the agenda, including land issues, victims’ rights, and Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration (DDR).

7. Fund women peacebuilders early on and throughout the process and during implementation of agreements.

This enables them to carry out consultations, draft statements and papers, and engage substantively in the process from the start and to engage in implementation and monitoring of accords. Refer to their outputs to inform and shape the agenda and the process, and in discussions with belligerent parties, as precedence in actions four and five show.

8. Allow flexibility for ongoing grants or provide new additional “rapid response” funding to women peacebuilders to enable them to travel on short notice and participate in peace processes.

Precedence: In 2019 ICAN’s Innovative Peace Fund (IPF) and Better Peace Initiative (BPI) mobilized within 16 days mobilized to provide financial support (travel, accommodation, per diems) and strategic advising (messaging and statement input) to Cameroonian women to enable them to engage in the National Dialogue.



9. Assist with issuing and expediting visas to enable last minute travel to peace talks/ pre-talks, provide other travel support (including transportation, accommodation and per diems) and assist in obtaining security clearance and access.

Precedence: In 2002, as Canada's Special Envoy for Peace in Sudan, Senator Mobina Jaffer with the support of mediator Salim Salim (former President of Tanzania), was able to insist that 17 Darfuri women be brought to the peace talks. By building rapport with the Arab League and the African Union, Jaffer was able to change the dynamics of the process despite the initial refusal by male negotiators to include women.

Precedence: In 2019 the European Union included Yemeni and Syrian women peacebuilders in its delegation to the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), enabling them to secure visas to the United States that would otherwise not have been issued. The peacebuilders were able to address and engage with a wide array of UN, member state and US government officials, as well as the global NGO community.

10. Before committing funding or political support consult with women peacebuilders to determine the viability and vulnerabilities of agreements, Don't commit support if agreements enable, validate or reinforce violence, corruption, discrimination and exclusion.

Precedence: In its May 2020 Conclusions on the *Future of the Afghanistan Peace Process and the European Union's Support* (8223/20 COR 1), the Council stated that the EU "will condition its future political and financial support to ensure that the republican, democratic and values-based principles are protected and further promoted". In reaffirming the EU's support for a negotiated political settlement leading to lasting peace and reconciliation, which must build on the democratic and fundamental freedoms of all Afghans especially women, children, all persons belonging to minorities and groups at risk must be protected and further strengthened to benefit from and to further the economic, social, political and development achievements of the past 19 years." It further states: "In line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, the EU reiterates the importance of meaningful participation of women in all peace initiatives including formal and informal peace negotiations."

Pressuring women peacebuilder coalitions to channel their concerns to the peace table through the warring parties can be harmful. First, it politicizes the issues that women raise, turning the lives and well-being of abductees, for example, into a political bargaining chip. Second, it can compromise the integrity and independence of women peacebuilders—as active citizens from war-affected communities—if they are perceived to be co-opted by one side. We are peace actors working in and on the conflict for the benefit of the people, not the political elite.

– Rasha Jarhum, Peace Track Initiative, Yemen