



## Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence

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\*Any reference to "UNIFEM" in the document must be understood to refer to "former UNIFEM", one of the four entities merged into the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on 21st July, 2010 by United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/64/289.

\*Any reference to United Nations "resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions or 5 WPS resolutions" in the document must be understood to refer to Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security 1325 (2000); 1820 (2008); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2009); and 1960 (2010).

On the cover: Sudanese take part in "Citizen Hearings" in Musfa, Blue Nile State, on the border between northern and southern Sudan. The hearings are part of a 21-day process of popular consultations where residents can express whether the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) has met their expectations.  
*Credit: UN Photo/Tim McKulka*



Women gather in the corridor of their home in Bagram, Afghanistan. *Credit: UN Photo/Eric Kanalstein*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

**MORE THAN A DECADE AFTER UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325 (2000) WAS UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED, THE STRIKING ABSENCE OF WOMEN FROM FORMAL PEACE NEGOTIATIONS REVEALS A TROUBLING GAP BETWEEN THE ASPIRATIONS OF COUNTLESS GLOBAL AND REGIONAL COMMITMENTS AND THE REALITY OF PEACE PROCESSES.** It has been 33 years since the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 30 years since the UN General Assembly's Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Cooperation, 17 years since the UN convened the Fourth World Conference on Women and participating governments issued the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and 12 years since resolution 1325 (2000) made women's participation in all aspects of peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding part of the remit of the Security Council. This imperative has been reiterated in subsequent resolutions, including 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), and 1960 (2010), and in several reports of the Secretary-General on mediation and on women, peace and security.

Since the first edition of this paper in August 2010, gender equality advocates and government and civil society actors have highlighted peace processes as a strategic entry point for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The decision of the Norwegian Nobel Committee to award the 2011 Peace Prize to Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman for their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peacebuilding processes reaffirmed the centrality of women's contribution to peace, and the essential connection between democracy, justice, and gender equality. For the first time in its history, the Nobel Committee referred to UN Security Council resolution 1325 in its statement, reiterating the decisive importance of women's leadership

in international peace and security. On 22 June 2011, the UN General Assembly also unanimously approved the first resolution (65/283) on peace mediation that has ever been adopted by this body. This resolution encourages strengthening the position of women in conflict resolution efforts and underscores the need for further engagement with civil society to ensure this occurs.

Yet, women's participation in peace processes remains one of the most unfulfilled aspects of the women, peace and security agenda. Our review of a sample of 31 major peace processes since 1992 shows that women represent a strikingly low number of negotiators, and that there has been little appreciable increase since the passage of resolution 1325 (2000). Women's

participation in negotiating delegations averaged 9 per cent in the 17 cases for which such information was available. 4 per cent of signatories in the peace processes included in this sample were women, and women were absent from chief mediating roles in UN-brokered talks.<sup>1</sup>

At the peace table, where crucial decisions about post-conflict recovery and governance are made, women are conspicuously underrepresented.

Some of the most noteworthy examples of women's participation in peace negotiations took place before the Security Council adopted this resolution on 31 October 2000. In the Republic of El Salvador in the 1990s, women were present at nearly all the post-accord negotiating tables. One technical table, the Reinsertion Commission, was formed by six women and one man. In the end, women made up one third of the beneficiaries of land redistribution and reintegration packages, which corresponded roughly with the percentage of female members of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), either as combatants or as collaborators.<sup>2</sup> In the Republic of South Africa in the mid-1990s, the Women's National Commission demanded that 50 per cent of participants in the Multi-Party Negotiating Process be women and succeeded in establishing that one out of every two representatives per party had to be a woman, or the seat would remain vacant. Approximately 3 million women across the country participated in focus groups and discussions, and a 30 per cent female quota was adopted for the upcoming elections.<sup>3</sup>

In Northern Ireland, women secured a seat at the peace table in 1997 by forming a women's cross-party political grouping and winning some seats in the election. The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition successfully built bridges between Catholics and Protestants and promoted reconciliation and reintegration of political prisoners.<sup>3</sup>

In the Republic of Guatemala, women significantly influenced the talks that led to the 1996 peace accord, in spite of the fact that only two women were included in the negotiating teams of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity and the Government of Guatemala. Civil society participation, including by women's groups, was strongly supported by the United Nations and the Group of Friends that sponsored the talks. Jean Arnault, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guatemala and mediator of the negotiations, endorsed the formal tabling of women's concerns and recommendations for the parties' consideration. Despite the underrepresentation of women at the peace table, the agreement contained a number of important provisions regarding gender equality.<sup>4</sup>

Several months before the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), Asha Haji Elmi formed the women's Sixth Clan in the Somali

Republic to lobby for participation in peace talks in Arta, Djibouti, because the five main Somali clans had all been given a seat at the table but had excluded women. Meanwhile in Burundi, also in 2000 prior to the passage of resolution 1325, while the 19 parties to the conflict were in the midst of another round of negotiations in Arusha (Tanzania), UNIFEM (now part of UN WOMEN) convened the All-Party Women's Peace Conference, attended by two women representing each of the parties to the conflict and the seven women who had access to the plenary sessions of the peace talks as observers. The women presented their list of recommendations to the facilitator of the negotiations, Nelson Mandela, and more than half of these recommendations were incorporated into the peace agreement.<sup>5</sup>

Since October 2000, only marginal progress has been made with regard to the number of women in formal peace processes or the design and conduct of peace talks in ways that would give greater voice to women, particularly from civil society. Over the same period, a limited number of provisions addressing women's human rights have been incorporated into peace agreements. This is in spite of growing participation of women in politics and the security sector, greater awareness about the differentiated impact of war on women and girls and the role they can play in conflict resolution, and evidence that peace negotiations characterized by high civil society involvement are less likely to result in resumed warfare.<sup>6</sup>

UN WOMEN and its partners have made this issue an important element of their programming: supporting women's political leadership, strengthening women's cross-national peace coalitions, supporting the inclusion of women in peace talks, providing gender expertise to mediation processes, building women's voice at donor conferences and other forums for the implementation of peace agreements, and developing guidance on specific topics, such as the neglect of conflict-related sexual violence in mediation processes.<sup>7</sup>

This paper reviews the modalities of engagement that have been used in various peace processes to enhance women's participation or the availability of gender expertise. It summarizes women's demands during peace negotiations as articulated in statements and declarations, assesses the gender-related content of peace agreements, and offers recommendations for the way forward. The findings outlined here will not be news to advocates and activists, but can provide a useful reality check to donors, policymakers and those within the UN and regional organizations upon whom rests the obligation to address the disparity between the goals of resolution 1325 (2000) and the reality of women's participation in peace processes.

*In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), women successfully advocated for formal participation in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue—a national convention on political reform and reconciliation convened by all the parties to the conflict—which initially excluded women. UNIFEM (now part of UN WOMEN) conducted a women's 'Peace Table' in October 2001 that resulted in the inclusion of gender issues and women's participation as substantive items on the official agenda, supported a delegation of African women*

*leaders led by Ruth Sando Perry (former Head of State of the Republic of Liberia) in a peace and solidarity mission to the DRC, and supported 60 women from across the country representing government, rebels, political opposition and civil society to convene in Nairobi, Kenya, in February 2002 for a national forum to harmonize their positions and define a common vision, which materialized in the form of the Nairobi Declaration and Action Plan. When dialogue resumed, 36 out of the 300 delegates to the Inter-Congolese Dialogue were women.*

## 2. GETTING TO THE PEACE TABLE

**AS INDICATED IN TABLE 1, THE AVERAGE NUMBERS OF WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS IN OFFICIAL ROLES—AS NEGOTIATORS, MEDIATORS, SIGNATORIES OR WITNESSES—REMAIN NOTABLY LOW.** Data on the numbers of women in peace talks are scarce, as this information is not consistently tracked by any authority. A study undertaken in 2008, which scanned 33 peace negotiations, found that only 4 per cent of participants—11 out of 280—were women, and that the average participation of women on government negotiating delegations was, at 7 per cent, higher than on the delegations of non-State armed groups.<sup>8</sup> Our own limited but reasonably representative sample of 31 major peace processes between 1992 and 2011 reveals that only 4 per cent of signatories, 2.4 per cent of chief mediators, 3.7 per cent of witnesses and 9 per cent of negotiators are women. Last year's negotiations in Oslo regarding the Philippines, with 33% of female signatories and 35% of women on delegations to reach the 2011 agreement, represent a stand-out high point without which the average number of women in the cases we have tracked drops to 3% of signatories and 7.5% of negotiators.

Since the first edition of this paper in August 2010, the level of women's participation in peace processes has shown a mixed evolution. While there has been no significant improvement with regard to women's participation in official positions (chief mediators, signatories), their representation within mediation teams and the number and frequency of consultations between the mediation team and women's groups have been increasing. From August 2008 to March 2012, women were signatories in only two of the 61 peace agreements that have been concluded over the period. However, in the 11 mediation processes that the UN was (co-) leading in 2011, the mediation teams held regular consultations with women's civil society organizations in 7 processes.

These figures indicate that the underrepresentation of women at the peace table is much more marked than in other public decision-making roles, where women are still underrepresented but where the gap has been steadily narrowing. This includes the roles that typically dominate peace talks: politician, lawyer, diplomat and member of a party to armed conflict. Women's structural exclusion from peace talks has significant consequences for the extent to which issues of concern to them – such as violence against women or women's citizenship rights – are addressed. Recent research highlights the devastating relationship between exclusion and fragility, highlighting a positive and significant correlation between severe economic and social

horizontal inequalities and conflict.<sup>10</sup> States are particularly vulnerable when large numbers of people living within their boundaries are disconnected from state institutions, and when state institutions are accountable only to an elite minority.<sup>11</sup> A degree of equality in social, political, economic and cultural rights is essential for rebuilding the trust between the state and society and among social groups. Therefore it is a plausible assumption that there is also a correlation between more inclusive and open models of negotiations and a higher likelihood that the outcome agreements will hold and prevent a relapse into conflict.

The absence of women in formal roles in peace processes poses one set of problems; the scarcity of women's civil society groups with consultative access to negotiators and mediators poses another. Women's groups often represent and voice women's priorities and concerns, and indeed are more likely to do so than

women within negotiating delegations, who are bound to their particular party's interests. As part of his seven-point Action Plan on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding, the Secretary-General mandated that his Special Envoys and Representatives regularly report on their consultations with women's civil society organizations. A strong case can be made for the involvement of women's groups in some structured way that ensures that their perspectives are heard. There is a correlation between the organized participation of women's groups and greater gender-sensitivity of the text of the agreements, which only enhances their comprehensiveness and legitimacy. Although this cannot be proven due to the very small number of cases to date, one can reasonably assume that the empowerment, mobilization and involvement of women's groups during the peacemaking phase can only support their engagement during the always-difficult phase of implementation and peacebuilding.

**Table 1: Women's participation in 31 peace processes (1992 - 2011)**

		Women Signatories	Women Lead Mediators	Women Witnesses	Women in Negotiating Teams
1	<b>El Salvador (1992)</b> <i>Chapultepec Agreement</i>	12%	0%	—	13%
2	<b>Croatia (1995)</b> <i>The Erdut Agreement</i>	0%	0%	0%	11%
3	<b>Bosnia (1995)</b> <i>The Dayton Accords</i>	0%	0%	0%	0%
4	<b>Guatemala (1996)</b> <i>Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace</i>	11%	0%	—	10%
5	<b>Northern Ireland (1998)</b> <i>Good Friday Agreement.</i>	10%	0%	—	10%
6	<b>Kosovo (1999)</b> <i>Interim agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo (The Rambouillet Accords)</i>	0%	0%	0%	3%
7	<b>Sierra Leone (1999)</b> <i>The Lomé Peace Agreement</i>	0%	0%	20%	0%
8	<b>Burundi (2000) – Arusha</b> <i>Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi</i>	0%	0%	—	2%
9	<b>Papua New Guinea (2001)</b> <i>Accord Papua New Guinea</i>	7%	0%	—	4%
10	<b>Macedonia (2001)</b> <i>The Ohrid Peace Agreement</i>	0%	0%	0%	5%
11	<b>Afghanistan (2001) – Bonn</b> <i>Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions</i>	9%	0%	—	9%
12	<b>Somalia (2002) - Eldoret</b> <i>Declaration on Cessation of Hostilities and the Structures and Principles. Principles of the Somalia National Reconciliation Process</i>	0%	0%	0%	—

13	<b>Cote d'Ivoire (2003)</b> <i>Linás-Marcoussis Peace Accords</i>	0%	0%	0%	—
14	<b>DRC (2003)</b> <i>The Sun City Agreement ("The Final Act")</i>	5%	0%	0%	12%
15	<b>Liberia (2003) – Accra</b> <i>Peace Agreement between the Government of Liberia, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia and the political parties</i>	0%	0%	17%	—
16	<b>Sudan (2005) - Naivasha</b> <i>The comprehensive peace agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/ Sudan People's Liberation Army.</i>	0%	0%	9%	—
17	<b>Darfur (2006) – Abuja</b> <i>Darfur Peace Agreement</i>	0%	0%	7%	8%
18	<b>Nepal (2006)</b> <i>Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)</i>	0%	—	0%	0%
19	<b>The Philippines (2007)</b> <i>Communique on the Tripartite Meeting between the GRP, MNLF and OIC</i>	0%	0%	—	—
20	<b>DRC (2008) - Goma - North Kivu</b> <i>Acte D'Engagement</i>	5%	20%	0%	—
21	<b>DRC (2008) - Goma - South Kivu</b> <i>Acte D'Engagement</i>	0%	20%	0%	—
22	<b>Uganda (2008)</b> <i>Juba Peace Agreement</i>	0%	0%	20%	9%
23	<b>Kenya (2008) – Nairobi</b> <i>Agreement on the Principles of Partnership of the Coalition Government</i>	0%	33%	0%	25%
24	<b>Central African Republic (2008)</b> <i>Accord de Paix Global</i>	0%	0%	0%	—
25	<b>Zimbabwe (2008)</b> <i>Agreement between the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the two Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) formations, on resolving the challenges facing Zimbabwe</i>	0%	0%	0%	—
26	<b>Somalia (2008)</b> <i>Agreement between the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia (TFG) and the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS) (The Djibouti Agreement)</i>	0%	0%	10%	—
27	<b>Honduras (2009)</b> <i>Diálogo Guaymuras Acuerdo Tegucigalpa/San José para la reconciliación nacional y el fortalecimiento de la democracia en Honduras - Intra-State Agreement</i>	33%	0%	—	—
28	<b>Iraq (2010)</b> <i>Erbil Agreement</i>	0%	0%	0%	—
29	<b>Philippines (2011)</b> <i>Oslo Joint Statement</i>	33%	0%	0%	35%
30	<b>Central African Republic (2011)</b> <i>Accord de cessez-le-feu entre l'UFDR et le CPJP</i>	0%	0%	0%	—
31	<b>Yemen (2001)</b> <i>Agreement on the implementation mechanism for the transition process in Yemen in accordance with the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)</i>	0%	0%	—	—



The President of the Somali Republic addresses a high-level meeting on the peace process in his country, held on the sidelines of the sixty-fifth General Assembly. Credit: UN Photo/Mark Garten

Given that there are so few peace agreements that include any reference to gender—let alone treat gender-related issues comprehensively in the provisions of the accord—it is difficult to assert with confidence the specific conditions under which women’s participation in peace agreements can result in better outcomes for the sustainability of peace or for the representation of women’s interests.

A small sample of cases provide examples of innovative interventions that have been made to make women’s participation more effective, as measured by the incorporation of women’s priorities and demands in the text of the peace agreement. First, women continue to be disproportionately highly represented in groups that agitate for peace and mobilize communities and society to demand that parties to the conflict lay down their arms and negotiate an agreement. This informal role, which is crucial and needs to be supported, often gets some recognition. Second, when individual women are placed in formal, official roles at the peace table—particularly as gender advisers to the mediation team, or legal professionals aiding the mediation teams or the party delegations—their impact on the language of the text and the inclusion of provisions specific to women is frequently significant. Finally, organized women’s groups have formed broad-based peace coalitions to lobby for a seat at the table and

articulate women’s demands in declarations and statements. The effectiveness of this last strategy can be enhanced if (a) the women’s coalition is broad-based and truly representative (it should be noted that in some contexts this is not feasible); and (b) a mechanism has been worked out in advance—that is, at the beginning of the process or even before it has started—to ensure that the coalition’s views systematically find their way to the peace table.

Otherwise, women’s groups risk spending their energy throughout the process trying to secure such entry points, often succeeding only belatedly in obtaining a non-speaking observer role with limited influence over the outcome of the text. Even when these conditions are in place, resources are still needed to ensure that women’s civil society groups are informed and receive logistical support.

Meanwhile, the UN and Member States have a responsibility to address the absence of incentives and accountability mechanisms that would facilitate the identification and appointment of qualified women candidates as chief mediators and technical experts to mediation teams, and that mediation experts receive adequate training and guidance material on gender issues across the range of subjects addressed in peace negotiation. For

instance, in many negotiation processes, mediators still felt that addressing sexual violence was not a priority for the negotiating parties, nor had they received clear orientation on this issue. In 2009, UN Women supported a High-Level Colloquium on “Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Peace Negotiations.”<sup>12</sup> At the opening of the colloquium, the moderator asked the mediators who were in the room whether they addressed sexual violence in any of their experiences of mediating conflicts. In their replies, all of them admitted that they did not and regretted, without exception, the absence of specific guidance to help mediation practitioners address women’s rights issues, such as conflict-related sexual violence. In March 2012, the UN Department of Political Affairs unveiled new guidelines to help mediators address conflict-related sexual violence in peace agreements and cease-fires. For the first time, mediators and their advisors are now provided with a framework for how to address the issue and since then, the *Guidance for Mediators on Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements*<sup>13</sup> has been issued to all UN mediators and mission chiefs. But addressing conflict-related sexual violence in peace processes is not only a matter of providing the right expertise. As the guidance notes state, women’s absence from the peace table is a major reason why negotiations rarely cover this topic. Not only do they have a wide range of other gender-related priorities, but they also contribute to the sustainability and broad social buy-in to the peace agreement. This guidance should therefore be put into the broader context of gender and mediation. In June 2011, the General Assembly resolution 65/283 requested the Secretary-General to develop guidance for more effective mediation and conflict resolution. This document was finalized in the summer of 2012 and included an entire section on women’s participation in the mediation process.

When reviewing patterns of women’s participation in peace processes, one must carefully distinguish between individual women filling an official role in the peace talks and those who participate on behalf of women as a social group—that is, speaking as part of a coalition of representatives of women’s civil society or community groups.

**The list that follows summarizes the various modalities through which women have participated in peace processes:**

**As mediators or as members of mediation teams:** The United Nations has never officially appointed a woman to be the chief mediator of a peace process. It should, however, be noted that a number of women have played a lead mediation role in recent decades. In particular, female Special Representatives of the Secretary-General have occasionally played an active role in facilitating negotiations. For instance, Dame Margaret Anstee was the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the Republic of Angola in the early 1990s and served as lead mediator

during part of the UN-led peace process. Similarly, a few years later, Dame Ann Hercus conducted shuttle talks in the Republic of Cyprus when she was the Special Advisor of the Secretary-General. In 2008, Graça Machel, a member of The Elders,<sup>14</sup> was one of three mediators in the peace negotiations, led by the African Union (AU), that ended the post-election crisis in the Republic of Kenya. In 2011, the United Nations was the (co-) lead mediator in fourteen conflicts, four of which resulted in an agreement. In these processes, women experts were included in 12 of the 14 UN mediation support teams.

While external mediation is usually the most visible process through which a peace agreement is negotiated, most official peace processes are initiated or supplemented by informal initiatives which can be facilitated by people from the conflict regions, with in-depth knowledge and great dedication to peacemaking.<sup>15</sup> They often operate without any explicit or formal mandate and rely on their personal relationships to facilitate discussions amongst parties that can then initiate or feed into official processes.<sup>16</sup> For instance, in 2004, Betty Bigombe, on her own initiative, worked as an unofficial mediator between the Government of the Republic of Uganda and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), laying the groundwork for the official peace talks in Juba a few years later. In 2011, a total of eleven peace agreements were signed around the world, involving five African, two Asian and two Middle Eastern countries. Among them, four agreements were brokered by domestic mediators (Nepal, Myanmar, Lesotho and Central African Republic).

**As delegates of the negotiating parties:** The negotiating parties not only discuss and agree on the substantive provisions of the peace accord. Often negotiating parties also set the agenda and the structure of the process – even the ‘shape of the table’ itself in terms of setting conditions on who participates and how. It remains rare to find women on negotiation teams. In 17 peace processes reviewed since 1992, on average, women account for only 9 percent of negotiating delegations. The composition of delegations in peace negotiations is fluid and variable, and thus strict numbers are difficult to track. But in the cases for which such information is available, percentages of women’s participation in delegations vary from zero to 35 per cent. Amongst the processes reviewed in this research, the negotiations between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) leading to the 2011 Oslo Joint Statement presents the highest percentage of female delegates, with the 42-member delegations comprising 15 women. This is a powerful illustration of the difference that can be made by women in positions of leadership, combined with longstanding advocacy on women, peace and security by the national women’s movement. The 2008 peace talks in Kenya were another example of strong women’s representation: two of

the eight delegates to the post-election peace talks were women, and Martha Karua led the Government's negotiating team. Other peace talks involved multiple parties and larger numbers of delegates. Women made up 40 out of 340 delegates in the 2003 talks leading to the Sun City Agreement in the DRC. Of the 132 delegates who participated in the Abuja talks that led to the Darfur Peace Agreement, 11 were women.

Women's influence on outcomes in these cases has varied. For example, women took part in both the 2006–2008 Juba peace talks between the Government of Uganda and the LRA and the various rounds of negotiations to end the conflict between North and South Sudan. The three female delegates in Juba, however, reportedly had a greater influence on the introduction of gender-related language in the agreements than the few women who were included in the delegation of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement, who were often co-opted on short notice and ignored. Indeed, Sudanese women's organizations were at one stage reduced to pushing their position papers and recommendations under the closed doors of the negotiation room.<sup>17</sup>

In the 14 mediation processes that the UN supported in 2011, representation of women among negotiating parties has remained low. In only four did parties to conflict include women as members of their delegations.<sup>18</sup> However, some strategies have proven successful in addressing this challenge. In Georgia, the adoption of the National Action Plan (NAP) for implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960 on women, peace and security has been instrumental in increasing the number of women in the Georgian Delegation to the Geneva Talks.<sup>19</sup> The NAP, which was adopted by the Georgian Parliament in December 2011, included specific provisions to increase participation of women in formal and informal peace processes, as well as the inclusion of women, peace, and security issues in the agenda of Geneva Talks. Consequently, the number of women in the delegation increased from one up to four women representatives in the ten-member delegation.

It is not always true that women in these negotiating teams employ a gender perspective or advocate for provisions in the text that would improve the situation of women. In the 2005 Aceh peace talks, widely considered a success, the rebel party negotiating delegation included one woman and there were none on the Government side. Later on, this one woman recognized that she was not aware of resolution 1325 (2000), nor did she at the time realize what the exclusion of women and gender issues meant for the future of the peace process. She acknowledged that she would have welcomed advice on a range of gender issues, but no support was available to ensure that mediators and parties to negotiations were aware of the

implications of their proposals for gender equality and for women's rights.<sup>20</sup>

Strengthening information exchange between women's groups and delegations has been a powerful strategy to encourage the negotiating parties to raise gender issues and increase the chance for the peace agreement to advance gender equality and protect women's rights. The example of Luz Méndez, delegate for the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity party (URNG) during the Guatemala peace talks in the mid-1990s, shows how a delegate can negotiate not only on behalf of her own party, but on behalf of all women. Influenced by her strong ties to civil society and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, Méndez made significant strides for the women of her country by advancing a number of gender equality concerns and ensuring that they were addressed in the agreements.

In March 2012, UN Women facilitated consultations between women's civil society organizations that work on women, peace, and security issues and two women members of the Georgian delegation to the Geneva Talks. Women's groups managed to share their consolidated recommendations to the delegates prior to the 19th round of talks and both women's NGOs and women delegates have become much more knowledgeable about each other's work. This both enlarged the social ownership of the process and made the delegates aware of the specific issues that women were facing in conflict-affected areas. In Zimbabwe, a female minister, Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga, participated as the only woman in the negotiations and kept in constant communication with women's organizations and activists until the adoption of the 2008 Global Political Agreement.

**As all-female negotiating parties representing a women's agenda:** The all-female negotiating party approach was once and famously applied in Northern Ireland, but it can be difficult to replicate in other contexts due to the very specific circumstances of the 1998 Northern Ireland peace talks. The particular design of the electoral system that determined the composition of the multi-party peace negotiations gave Monica McWilliams and May Blood the opportunity to represent a newly created party, the cross-community Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, at the 20-member negotiating table. Elections were held to distribute seats in the 110-member Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue, and two seats were reserved for representatives of the top ten parties. Despite the relatively low number of votes obtained, the women's party was among the top ten most-voted parties and obtained two seats in the consultative forum and two seats—accorded equally to each party represented in the larger forum—at the negotiating table.<sup>21</sup>

**As signatories:** A strikingly low number of women have actually been signatory to the text of accords. Two women, Ana

Guadalupe Martínez and María Marta Valladares, signed the Chapultepec Agreement that put an end to the conflict in El Salvador in the early 1990s—a sign of the comparatively high level of representation of women in the leadership of the FMLN. Two women, Sema Wali and Amena Afzali, also signed the Bonn Agreement in 2001. The women were invited as part of the delegation of the former monarch, Mohammad Zahir Shah, in contrast with the all-male delegations representing the Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras of the Northern Alliance, on one hand, and the Pashtuns on the other. Sometimes the individual is signing on behalf of women, rather than as a delegate who happens to be female. This was the case of Asha Hagi Elmi, who became the first ever female signatory to a peace agreement in Somalia in 2004.<sup>22</sup> She had earned her participation in the peace talks two years earlier in Eldoret as the representative of the Sixth Clan, created in 2000 out of a network of women with cross-clan marriages, which grew to represent the pan-Somali women's movement. The Sixth Clan sought representation at the talks in response to the fact that none of the five traditional Somali clans had included women in the negotiations.

**As witnesses:** Peace negotiations are often officially witnessed by an individual or group of individuals who attend the signing ceremony and may or may not have attended the rest of the talks. In most cases, they also sign the agreement, normally on behalf of the country or countries sponsoring or facilitating the talks. For example, Heidi Johansen representing Norway and Anna Sundström as European Union representative for the Great Lakes region participated as formal witnesses through various stages of the Juba peace talks. Kathleen List also signed the 2008 Djibouti Agreement on Somalia on behalf of the USA which then acted as State witness to the talks. The 'witness' category, however, is much less relevant than the others, given their ostensibly representational role and limited input into the process and the content of the accords.

**As representatives of women's civil society with an observer role:** This is one of the most sought-after forms of engagement by women in peace talks, and yet the one that yields the most uneven results. In Liberia, a delegation of eight women from the Liberia chapter of the Mano River Women's Peace Network, led by Ruth Sando Perry and Theresa Leigh-Sherman, participated in the peace talks in 2003 as official observers without the power to speak or vote. At a later stage, in Accra, Ghana, the Liberian Women in Peacebuilding Program (WIPNET) was also granted observer status, but they had a greater impact as agitators for peace, both during many months of restless social mobilization, sit-ins, vigils and demonstrations, and by physically impeding the delegates from leaving the site of the talks without signing the peace agreement, as powerfully depicted in the 2008 documentary *Pray The Devil Back To Hell*.<sup>23</sup> The various groups of women



A celebratory atmosphere pervades the city of Msallata, Libya, on the ninety-third anniversary of the Republic of Tripolitania, a Libyan territory which formally declared its independence during Italian colonial rule. Women chant and raise Libyan flags during celebrations for the anniversary. Credit: UN Photo/Jason Founten

observers to the talks had convened a one-day meeting shortly before the signing and produced the 'Golden Tulip Declaration' (named after the hotel where they had met), which summarized women's demands and aspirations. However, the women advocated for peace rather than demanding specific provisions on gender justice, which they feared would derail the process.

Similarly, two different women's coalitions from Uganda were granted official observer status in Juba, but this was also at the end of the process and without a speaking or consultative role. Their influence had been much greater through the previous tabling of women's implementation protocols to complement the agreements, facilitated by their regular contact with the UNIFEM (now part of UN WOMEN) gender adviser to the UN Special Envoy to the talks, the legal experts in the mediation team and the women who were part of the negotiating delegations.

In the 2000 talks for Burundi, seven women were, also belatedly, granted observer status after many months of exclusion despite their intense lobbying. Even though other civil society representatives had been given observer status, women were excluded

on the grounds that no group could claim to represent women or speak on behalf of all Burundian women. They stood in the corridors during sessions and lobbied the international community, including donor countries, regional leaders and African women's rights organizations, but it was only after they managed to meet the chief mediator, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, that they were able to hold a special session with the heads of the 19 negotiating parties, present their case and, after initial rejection, finally be allowed in the room. Nyerere's successor, Nelson Mandela, continued to engage women's groups and facilitate their inclusion in the talks. In the end, all the female delegates and observers held a four-day All-Party Burundi Women's Peace Conference in July 2000 and drafted a declaration with proposals for the final agreement. These were submitted to Mandela, and many were incorporated into the comprehensive peace agreement.

**In a parallel forum or movement:** Holding a parallel peace conference is one of the most frequent methods employed by women, often not by choice or design, but as a reaction to women's exclusion from the official peace talks. In 2000, nearly 500 women convened at the first All Acehese Women's Congress, distributed their 22 recommendations to the various parties, including the President, and lobbied for the involvement of women in the negotiations, which were then being facilitated by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. Despite their efforts, the five-year process culminating in the 2005 Memorandum of Understanding between the Government and the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka / GAM) only included one woman delegate. This had important consequences, including very low representation of women in the post-agreement implementation bodies. In the first list of compensation recipients, which contained 3,000 names, there was not a single woman, despite the ubiquitous photos of the GAM women's wing used in media campaigns.<sup>24</sup>

A second All Acehese Women's Congress was organized in June 2005, with strong technical and financial support from UNIFEM (now part of UN WOMEN). After several preparatory meetings to help local women articulate their concerns, over 400 women spoke up about their priorities and issues, including the lack of consultation in key decisions such as relocation, land ownership, relief distribution and inadequate protection for displaced women and girls in temporary accommodations. A similar approach has been used in many countries—including for donor conferences in which the international community pledges its financial support to peace agreements—namely, to draw up an agreed list of demands or concerns, call attention to the absence of women in the formal process and occasionally shame the participants of the official talks into giving one of

their representatives an opportunity to speak or introduce these declarations of priorities in the record of the proceedings.

Finally, as an example of social mobilization, in Uganda, the Uganda Women's Peace Coalition formed a Women's Peace Caravan in 2006. They took the UNIFEM (now part of UN WOMEN) women's peace torch from Kampala through Uganda all the way to the site of the peace talks, in Juba, Sudan, to protest the underrepresentation of women in the peace negotiations.

**As gender advisers to mediators, facilitators or delegates:** This is one of the most effective strategies if the goal is to ensure the inclusion of adequate gender-related provisions in the text of the agreement. In Uganda, the UNIFEM (now part of UN WOMEN) gender adviser to the Secretary-General's Special Envoy to the LRA-Affected Areas in Uganda was able to play the double role of influencing the Special Envoy and the other parties to the negotiation on the one hand and, on the other, aiding the women's peace coalition to conduct consultations and develop women's protocols for each subject to accompany the accords. The multiple agreements yielded by the Juba peace talks contain a number of gender-equality provisions. There is a striking difference in the language of the agreements between the earlier accords and the later ones, dating from the point at which the women's coalition had begun to be able to articulate and communicate their views to the parties. Unfortunately, the final peace agreement was never signed by the LRA, but the network of women's organizations has continued to act in unison by tracking the implementation of the Peace and Reconstruction Development Plan for Northern Uganda.

Similarly, UNIFEM (now part of UN WOMEN) seconded a gender expert to the mediation team in the Abuja peace talks for Darfur in 2006. In addition to facilitating the formation of a Gender Expert and Support Team (GEST) and the involvement of the female delegates in the drafting of women's priorities, the gender expert helped to cement a common gender platform that was largely incorporated in the text of the Darfur Peace Agreement, including gender-responsive provisions on wealth sharing and land rights, physical security, affirmative action and special measures, and women's participation in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme. In 2011, mediation advisors from the UN Department of Political Affairs consistently informed Somali stakeholders and UN mediators on the consequences of the provisions that were being negotiated on women's rights and gender equality. During the Second National Constitutional Conference for Somalia in February, they advised on the adoption of measures to ensure that at least 30% of the members of the future Interim Independent Electoral Commission, the National Constituent Assembly and the new Federal Parliament seats would be women.

**As members of technical committees, or a separate table or working group devoted to gender issues:** Having the opportunity to work out the technical details of the implementation of agreements is frequently one of the most desirable modalities of women's participation—assuming that engagement in such technical committees or forums entails a channel for formal reporting to the peace table. In Sri Lanka in 2002, women succeeded in establishing a sub-committee on gender formed by women appointed by the negotiating parties. This sub-committee was one of several thematic groups formed to address areas of specific concern, and its remit included the right to address the negotiators in plenary session to, in this case, transmit women's concerns, recommendations and demands.

In El Salvador in the early 1990s, women were present at nearly all post-accord technical tables that worked out the implementation details of the agreement; this made an important difference in enabling them to refine technical details to facilitate implementation of their priorities.

In Guatemala in 1996, women were part of a much broader consultative Assembly of Civil Society with regular channels of communication with the participants of the peace talks and with the right to review and comment on the contents of the peace accords in step with the drafting process. This strategy is advisable if women are in a reasonably strong position in civil society and can hold their own in competition with other civil society interests. In contexts where their voice is muted by more powerful interest groups or members of civil society, it is perhaps advisable to have a separate gender expert group with an advisory function, as in Sri Lanka or Darfur.

It is impossible to prescribe which approach works best for each situation. Every peace process is unique, and opportunities and methods of women's engagement are shaped by the political culture, the strength and coherence of the women's peace movement, the duration of the war and the extent to which it has exhausted or dissipated the women's movement, the type of international support and resources supplied, and so on. Furthermore, one cannot dismiss the enormous difference that exceptional individuals can make, from the mediators that took it upon themselves to facilitate women's access to peace talks—like Arnault in Guatemala, Nyerere or Mandela in Burundi, Annan in Kenya or Benomar in Yemen<sup>25</sup>—to the women who charted their own path, like Anne Itto in South Sudan, Pampha Bhusal in Nepal, Teresita 'Ging' Deles in the Republic of the Philippines, or Asha Hagi Elmi in Somalia.

Regardless of strategy of choice or circumstance, there should be standard practice in mediation that ensures that mediators consult with women and help them determine the best means

of engagement for civil society groups, and routinely explain to negotiating delegations the merits of including women delegates, as well as encouraging them to do so. Furthermore, despite the diversity of contexts, there is a growing body of demands and priorities articulated by women of all backgrounds in different conflict situations. Even when they fail to make their way into the text of a peace agreement or persuade donor countries to pay attention to gender issues during the implementation of the accords, they serve as a powerful reminder of women's distinct concerns and stand as moving testimony to women's right to represent their interests in peace processes—precisely because if women do not represent their concerns, others do not, and an important set of issues remains neglected.

### 3. WOMEN'S DEMANDS IN PEACE PROCESSES

In spite of the low levels of female participation in peace talks, the resistance that women often face and the exhaustion of conflict-affected women and girls, women have continued to find creative ways of expressing their concerns in peace processes. When excluded from the peace table venue, women have held parallel processes of their own. When locked out of the rooms where decisions are made, women have pushed their position papers and their recommendations through the gaps under the doors. When ignored, they have approached decision-makers on airport tarmacs to get a meeting, or barricaded the meeting room to force the delegates to reach a settlement, as in Liberia in 2003. When silenced, they have taken to the streets and even the chamber of the UN Security Council to make themselves heard.

Sometimes, women's demands and priorities are proactively drawn up by women from both the negotiating teams and women's civil society groups, as in the Nairobi Declaration prior to the Sun City talks. Sometimes, women's demands are summed up in a memo or a letter, making their way to the peace table via the mediator or the facilitator, such as Kofi Annan as chief mediator of Kenya's post-election crisis or Ian Martin as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy in the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. Sometimes women's demands are technical and specific, and sometimes they are beautiful and inspiring, like the 2008 declaration by Congolese women that expressed their outrage in a simple poem called 'Je dénonce' (I denounce). Sometimes these statements show a close knowledge of UN planning processes, as when they ask for situation analyses and needs assessments focused on women and girls and using gender-disaggregated data. And sometimes, like in Aceh, Kosovo, or South Sudan, the demands are not agreed, drafted or communicated until the implementation phase, after the accords have been signed. But even in their diversity, when women's organizations come together to draft a set of priorities or demands, one can observe some common themes and recommendations that are repeated in most declarations, even if formulated slightly differently.

On security and protection, women demand that gender-based violence be understood as a violation of the ceasefire and monitored as such, gender training at all levels for national or international armed forces, gender-sensitive security sector reform and DDR, special measures for the protection of women refugees and internally displaced persons, and an end to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. In approximately

75 per cent of their demands, women have highlighted sexual violence as a special concern, which contrasts with the scarcity of explicit mentions of sexual violence in the text of peace agreements. Women's recommendations often include examples of how to implement their demands, for instance by establishing quotas for women in the police, the military forces and ceasefire-monitoring teams, vetting perpetrators, or providing international peacekeepers with a robust mandate that emphasizes protection of civilians. Women's platforms often highlight matters that are of special concern in a given context, like anti-personal mines in Afghanistan, violence and threats against women's human rights defenders in the DRC, or child recruitment in the Republic of Sierra Leone.

With regard to participation, women demand a seat at the peace table and increased political participation post-accord, at both local and national levels, and often in the form of quotas, affirmative action measures or non-discrimination guarantees, as well as the establishment of national gender machineries at ministerial level. Peace processes are indeed seized as an opportunity to transform the political landscape of society, increase women's political participation and representation in elections, and advocate for the appointment of women in decision-making bodies, from cabinets and parliaments to commissions implementing specific provisions of the accords (e.g., reconstruction, return and reintegration, and reconciliation commissions) and key administrative bodies (like the Petroleum Commission in the Republic of Sudan). Some of the examples highlighted below show that women activists are not content with last-minute acceptance of their attendance as observers, and that the request for gender expertise in mediation teams is independent from the rightful inclusion of women at the peace talks.



From March 2008 onwards, approximately 389 families of IDPs (Internally Displaced) have returned to Louboutigue, eastern Chad, by their own means. Women returnees are being interviewed by UN and NGO representatives to find out the underlying causes of returns. Credit: UN Photo/Olivia Grey Pritchard

On economic empowerment, reconstruction and socio-economic recovery, women's civil society organizations generally emphasize land and inheritance rights, access to credit (including grants and interest-free loans), access to education for women and girls, a strong investment in skills-training and capacity-building, and special attention to the needs of female-headed households. Mindful that women's exclusion from power-sharing and wealth-sharing deals at the peace table and in national government, along with the relatively low priority assigned to women's recovery needs, can result in low levels of funding for gender-related spending, they demand consideration of the special needs of women during repatriation, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict recovery, and ask for earmarks

and special measures and funds. This is a recommendation that is increasingly voiced during donor conferences, in which the international community pledges or renews its financial support for the implementation of peace agreements. For example, on the eve of the Oslo Donors Conference for Sudan in April 2005, 50 Sudanese women from all parts of the country asked for the establishment of a women's fund within the Multi-Donor Trust Fund, specifically devoted to financing women-specific programmes, and demanded that women's organizations be accorded a formal role in the management and disbursement of funds. These statements sometimes include detailed sections on health and education.

Examples of women's demands on security and protection

**Brussels Action Plan: Roundtable on Building Women's Leadership in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan (10–11 December 2001).**

“Enhance and accelerate gender-sensitive mine action..., with a special emphasis on mine clearance, mine awareness, assistance, and rehabilitation.”

**Statement by Women Activists in the DRC (Kinshasa, May 2009).**

“In fact, despite several resolutions adopted by the UN for the protection of women before, during, and after conflict, women and girls, particularly the activists, are increasingly threatened, intimidated, attacked, and even killed because of their will to defend sexual violence victims.”

**A Call for an End to the Armed Conflict in Sierra Leone and for Steps to be Taken to Bring Lasting Peace (Addis Ababa, 28 January 1999).**

“We condemn the abduction and use of children as armed combatants. The use of children is a strong factor in the perpetuation of violence and in the disintegration of societal norms and traditions. This is in violation of both the African and international conventions on the rights of children and is a scourge for our future.”

**Women's Recommendations on Demobilization, excerpted from the Agenda of the Uganda Women's Coalition for Peace (2006).**

“Recruit female military observers to oversee the screening process for women associated armed forces and groups.

Ensure that cantonment sites are women-friendly—that they are safe and provide healthcare, childcare, and training. Establish secure centers for women, and provide health services and access to education on sites.

Allow women combatants to report to women field workers and train support workers to recognize and address women's needs.

Give women the option of registering separately and obtaining separate ID cards.

Utilize gender-disaggregated data to identify the socio-economic profile of groups.

Allocate special funds for women and provide financial assistance to women combatants and associates separately from their male family members.

Inform women of benefits available to them and their legal rights.

Protect women from gender-based violence within sites and during transport home.

Recruit and train women ex-combatants for positions in the police and security forces.”

**Women's Priorities in the Peace Process and Reconstruction in Darfur (Abuja, 30 December 2005).**

“Establish a civilian police with women constituting not less than 30% of the force. At least 30% of those recruited into the regular forces and judicial organs should be women. For purposes of admission into military academies and institutions, there should be positive discrimination in favor of the best female students from Darfur.”

**Key Principles from Afghan Women for the National Peace Jirga (Kabul, May 2010).**

“Reintegration packages must not be targeted to individual fighters, but rather should benefit the whole receiving community, to create incentives for communities to engage in rehabilitating combatants and their families. Reintegration packages could include funding for schools, employment schemes, and vocational training.

Families, rather than individual combatants, should be reintegrated in order to support community recovery and healing.

Security sector reform efforts should include the six actions set out by the National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan—affirmative action, gender-responsive budgeting, human rights and training, gender planning tools, specific focus on gender-based violence, and a culture of peace—and should achieve at least a 20 per cent increase in women's employment in five years.

Women should be represented in national security sector oversight bodies such as the parliamentary defense committee and the National Security Council.”

**Examples of women's demands on participation  
Final Declaration of the All-Party Burundi Women's Peace Conference (Arusha, 20 July 2000).**

“We, the women of Burundi, participants and observers to this conference... deplore the fact that women of Burundi were not included in the negotiations until this very late stage.”

**The Golden Tulip Declaration of Liberian Women Attending the Peace Talks in Accra (15 August 2003).**

“That women leaders who are currently observers at the Accra Peace Talks be made delegates and be given voting rights, including placement on the Vetting Committee.”

**Women's Memorandum to the Mediation Team in Kenya (Nairobi, 25 January 2008).**

“That a local gender advisor be appointed to provide the necessary expertise to the team of mediators. There is sufficient expertise within the women's movement in Kenya in the fields of gender, children's rights, women's rights, and conflict transformation.”

**Women's Priorities in the Peace Process and Reconstruction in Darfur (Abuja, 30 December 2005).**

“Accord women all the rights stipulated in the Interim Constitution of the Republic of the Sudan as well as in international and regional instruments. Empower them to participate and be represented at all levels of decision making, while ensuring that such representation is to the tune of 30% at national level, and 50% at Darfur governance level, in accordance with the agreement to be concluded between the Government and the Movements.

**Executive Organs:**

The Presidency: Women to be appointed Presidential Assistants and Representatives, as well as the Assistants and Representatives to the two Vice Presidents.

Council of Ministers: Women to be appointed to senior positions in Ministries especially such strategic Ministries as Finance, Economic Planning, Energy, Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research as well as the Census Board and Urbanization Department.

Women to be appointed to senior positions in all Commissions, especially key ones such as the Petroleum Commission.

**Legislative Organs:**

Women to participate effectively in the Parliament and be appointed Chairpersons of Specialized Commissions.

Women to participate actively in the National Electoral Commission.

**Judicial Organs:**

Women to participate effectively in the National Judicial Commission and other Judicial Bodies.

Women from Darfur to be appointed to senior positions within the Judicial Structure and the Office of the Attorney General...”

**Letter to Special Envoy Ian Martin from Women's Network in Timor-Leste (7 July 2006).**

“To facilitate a review of the draft electoral law to include an affirmative action clause with a provision of minimum 30% target for women's inclusion in winnable positions in political party lists, and to guarantee women's participation as independent candidates...”

Ensure that women candidates have access to means of communication, including electronic, radio, and television.

Establish a National Electoral Commission.

Develop a gender strategy for the electoral process.”

**Examples of women's demands on economic empowerment, reconstruction and socio-economic recovery**

**Brussels Action Plan: Roundtable on Building Women's Leadership in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan (Brussels, 10–11 December 2001).**

“Ensure food security for women by involving them in the design and distribution of food and water programmes, including women and their families in rural areas and camp situations...”

Provide immediate support for women's psycho-social health care, disability, emergency and reproductive health needs, including those related to HIV/AIDS.

Provide refresher and new courses at village and neighborhood level to train women in health services, including health-education, child-delivery and mother-child health-care.

Provide scholarships and specialist training for women physicians in the field of gynecology, internal disease and surgery...

Prioritize the rebuilding of girls' schools and build new schools equipped with all necessary supplies, tools and materials, including provision of school feeding.

Revise existing primary, secondary and high school textbooks from a gender perspective and ensure the printing and distribution of primary, secondary and high school textbooks.

Provide scholarships and support to university departments of Islamic studies to promote progressive and enlightened Islam teachings.

Support scholarships and education in foreign languages in order to enable Afghan women to use their existing skills more effectively in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Provide computer equipment, national and international network facilities, as well as advanced relevant training for women.

Provide kindergartens, playgrounds and mother-child-care centers to enable mothers to take up and enjoy employment opportunities.”

**Women's Recommendations on Resettlement, excerpted from the Agenda of the Uganda Women's Coalition for Peace (2006).**

“Government should sit and discuss with clan, cultural, and religious leaders to map out strategies for resettling people in the land of their family or clan and explore other options of land ownership other than limiting their solutions to customary ownership, because this ownership tends to leave out the women and children.”

Key Principles from Afghan Women for the National Peace Jirga (Kabul, May 2010).

“Aid should be monitored to track its effectiveness in promoting women’s rights and gender equality. Donors should ensure that a certain amount of funds are dedicated specifically to the promotion of women’s rights and addressing their urgent needs.”

On justice and reparations, women’s statements seek accountability for gender-based violence and other violations of women’s rights and an end to impunity, especially for crimes of sexual violence in war. They insist on women’s participation in transitional justice processes and in management of the disbursement of reparations or compensation. The need for guidelines to clarify the relationship between the traditional or customary and the formal legal systems is also mentioned. This may take the form of calls for the establishment of independent human rights commissions, as in Afghanistan, or a fact-finding mission by the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, as in the Republic of Zimbabwe. In Afghanistan in particular this question is very salient, as women demand that their rights not be traded away in exchange for reconciliation with and reintegration of the Taliban. Sometimes, however, this call for justice is muted (as in Liberia) or postponed (as in Uganda) under the impression that efforts to hold perpetrators accountable could undermine the possibility of putting an end to the conflict.

Just as important, women’s recommendations often include an explicit demand that the national Government, even if only symbolically, recognize or acknowledge the special impact of the conflict on women and girls, and the role that they have played to keep communities together or make peace. Knowing the limited capacity of the State and the international community to implement the ambitious provisions of peace agreements and reach communities in remote areas affected by the war, they demand that civil society be strengthened and their capacity built so as to effectively fulfill their role.

Women’s coalitions have been successful to various degrees in having their recommendations incorporated in the text of peace agreements, i.e. in their statements and declarations of principles and priorities. Even if adding such provisions does not automatically mean that they will be implemented properly, if at all, their mere inclusion can enhance the legitimacy or perceived fairness of the agreement vis-à-vis the general population, provide civil society and other actors with some leverage for future advocacy during the implementation phase, and contribute to changes in the normative understanding of what peace processes should be like and what should be the subject of peace accords.

Examples of women’s demands on justice and reparations

Final Declaration of the All-Party Burundi Women’s Peace Conference (Arusha, 20 July 2000).

“It pains us very much that we and our daughters have suffered war crimes such as rape, sexual violence, prostitution and domestic violence that have gone unrecognized and unpunished. We ask that this agreement put an end to impunity.”

Women’s Memorandum to the Mediation Team in Kenya (Nairobi, 25 January 2008).

“An independent investigation into the trigger event to establish the truth of what happened, the outcome of which should be tailored to establishing a political solution to the current impasse and restoring public confidence in Kenya’s institutions of democracy. Any agreement should be backed by the force of law and ensure women’s participation as key actors.”

Key Principles from Afghan Women for the National Peace Jirga (Kabul, May 2010).

“Commitments must be made to ensure safe conditions for women to engage in planned or future truth, reconciliation, or judicial processes. This will require mechanisms to establish complete confidentiality of witnesses, and training and preparation of judicial personnel to process these cases in ways that protect the dignity of the affected. Any reparations programme should ensure provision of reparations to women who have been the direct victims of the conflict. Reparations must be provided in a non-stigmatizing way that does not expose the identities of women recipients. Community reparations may be a viable option in this regard.”

Women’s Recommendations on Accountability and Reconciliation, excerpted from the Agenda of the Uganda Women’s Coalition for Peace (2006).

“Propose that Government deals with first things first, which at the moment is the peace process. In this regard, Government should guarantee the safety of the LRA within its spheres of operation and request the UN and the ICC to give the peace talks a chance by stalling their request.”

## 4. TEXTUAL INCLUSION: THE GENDER-RELATED CONTENT OF PEACE AGREEMENTS

**MORE THAN A DECADE AFTER THE ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION 1325 (2000), GENDER-BLIND PEACE AGREEMENTS ARE STILL THE NORM, RATHER THAN THE EXCEPTION.** Many peace accords include a general equality clause and non-specific references to human rights guarantees and international treaties, but rarely mention quotas or other special measures to reverse women’s exclusion from decision-making, nor allocate responsibility to monitor that equality is indeed achieved.

Sexual violence is also often absent from accords, even in conflicts where widespread sexual violence has been employed as a tactic of warfare. Peace processes typically package a ceasefire together with several peace agreements over time, sometimes developed in quick succession and dealing with different themes or stages, and sometimes spanning longer lapses reflecting the repeated breakdowns and resumptions of the process. Out of approximately 300 peace agreements reviewed by UNIFEM (now part of UN WOMEN)—roughly corresponding to 45 peace processes between 1989 and 2008—only 18 made mention of sexual gender-based violence, and even fewer set out concrete steps to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable, or offering redress to the survivors. Women’s access to and ownership of land, or their stake in wealth-sharing provisions, almost never appears in the text of a peace agreement. Many accords refer to women alongside children, the elderly, the displaced and the disabled as a vulnerable group requiring special assistance, although not specifying what type of assistance or how will it be provided.

An independent and systematic review of 585 peace agreements that have resulted from 102 peace processes in the last two

decades, revealed that since 1990, only 92 peace agreements (16 per cent) have contained at least one reference to women or gender.<sup>26</sup> These mentions have indeed increased since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000)—from 11 per cent to 27 per cent—but much of this rise has to do with more systematic inclusion of explicit references to women and gender in peace agreements since 2008, especially for conflicts like Uganda or the DRC which feature alarming rates of violence against women and girls. Furthermore, the study established that agreements resulting from processes in which the UN was not involved were more likely to mention women or gender than those in which the UN was a third party to the peace talks. As many actors have set out to assess the performance of the UN system in implementing resolution 1325 (2000) ten years after its adoption, this finding is very revealing. The authors concluded that “there is little evidence of systematic inclusion of women in peace agreement texts, or systematic treatment of issues across peace agreements within conflicts... Longer-term assessments appear to be in agreement that resolution 1325 (2000) has been more effective as a focus of mobilization for women outside of peace processes than in securing women’s participation within formal peace processes.”



Students of Kabul schools join together, writing their messages of peace on banners in observance of the United Nations International Day of Peace. Credit: UN Photo/Jawad Jalali

**Table 2: Number of peace agreements—out of 585 peace agreements from 1990 to 2009—with references to and mentions of women and gender<sup>27</sup>**

General reference to political and legal equality on the basis of gender or non-discrimination	25
Reference to social equality or worker's rights with specific mention of women or gender	17
Explicit reference to sexual violence	17
Need to protect women's human rights or ensure the application of humanitarian law to women	16
General reference to 'effective participation of women' in politics or gender balance in appointments:	15
Promotion of women's role in the implementation of the peace agreement (sometimes by insisting on the nomination of women to key implementation bodies)	13
Reference to women and/or women's needs in rehabilitation or reconstruction	12
Reserved seats or quotas for women in legislative or executive bodies	9
Promotion of women's organizations:	9
Reference to gender-based violence or violence against women	8
Reference to CEDAW or other women-specific international legal measures	7
Crimes against women to be addressed by specific mechanism to deal with the past	7
Needs of women and girl combatants in DDR processes	7
Special reference to resolution 1325 (2000) itself	5
Quotas for indigenous women	5
Representation of women in the police and women-centered police reform	5
Representation of women in the judiciary	4
Reference to women in relation to reform of public administration	4
Reference to women in relation to development:	4
Establishment of specific institution for women or gender equality as part of the new institutional configuration	4
Sexual violence as a ceasefire violation	4
Women prioritized for prisoner's early release	4

Amongst the four processes supported by the UN that resulted in an agreement in 2011, only two of them included detailed provisions on women's rights and gender equality, such as temporary special measures for women's participation in transitional bodies. The statement on Somalia's end-of-transition roadmap adopted in 2011 includes 30% minimum quota for women's participation in the six committees in charge of the priority tasks to end the transition. The 2011 agreement on the implementation mechanism for the transition process in Yemen also indicates that "each party shall account for 50 per cent of nominees for the government of national unity, and due consideration shall be given to the representation of women." It also underlines that "the government of national unity shall convene a comprehensive conference for national dialogue for all forces and political actors, including (...) women" and that "women must be represented in all participating groups."

A review of the major peace agreements concluded between August 2008 and April 2012 shows that 17 of the 61 accords included gender-related keywords.<sup>28</sup> However, most references were worded in general terms and often included in the preamble or annexes of the peace agreements. For instance, over the period, only the 2008 Global Political Agreement on Zimbabwe made specific reference to the right of women to possess land. The 2009 Peace Agreement between the Government of DRC and the CNDP is also the only one to include specific provisions on reconciliation between men and women following the armed violence: "The Parties agree on the creation of a national mechanism in charge of defining and leading a policy of reconciliation between the men and women of the Congo, and to fight against xenophobia".<sup>29</sup>

**Table 3: Thematic breakdown of references to women, peace and security in peace agreements concluded between August 2008 and April 2012**

References to Women, Peace and Security	Number of peace agreements which include references to Women, Peace and Security
General references to women, security, development and economic recovery (generally in the preamble)	1
General reference to women and justice, accountability and reconciliation	1
General reference to women and reparations	1
General reference to gender and power sharing	1
Reference to women or gender representation in political institutions	4
General reference to gender, non-discrimination and human rights	6
Reference to gender-based violence or violence against women	3
Reference to UNSCR 1325 or subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security	2
Reference to women's right to work	1
Reference to women and quotas	2
Reference to women's access to economic resources and landrights	1



United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM): Somali women, including elders of the community, assembled for a meeting with Admiral Jonathan T. Howe, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia. Credit: UN Photo / Milton Grant

These results are a matter for concern, taking into account that women's participation in peace talks is one of the cornerstones of resolution 1325 (2000), and that women's civil society groups have used this to increase their demands to participate in peace agreements and inject them with language that addresses gender issues.

One of the above categories deserves special attention. In 2009, UNIFEM (now part of UN WOMEN) focused on the scarcity of references to sexual violence in peace agreements and mediation processes, and identified 18 accords in which there is at least one mention of sexual violence or gender-based violence (GBV), using a smaller pool of agreements—roughly 300—than that used by Bell and O'Rourke. These 18 accords are for 10 conflict situations: Burundi, Indonesia–Aceh, DRC, Sudan–Nuba Mountains, Sudan–Darfur, Nepal, the Philippines, Uganda, Guatemala and

Mexico–Chiapas. Sexual violence is mentioned as a violation of the ceasefire in only six peace processes (Burundi, Indonesia–Aceh, DRC, Sudan–Nuba Mountains, Sudan–Darfur and Nepal). For the rest, it is sometimes mentioned in the preamble or general section describing the conflict. Only two peace agreements (DRC 2003 and Uganda 2007) refer to sexual violence as requiring a specific response in the justice section; four refer to it in relation to rule of law and human rights (Guatemala 1995 and 1996, Mexico–Chiapas 1996 and the Philippines 1998); in two it appears within provisions dealing with security arrangements (Sudan–Darfur 2006 and Nepal 2006); and in two it is mentioned in relation to DDR (DRC 2003 and Uganda 2008). In the sample reviewed by UN WOMEN, no cases were found where it was mentioned as deserving particular attention in relation to reparations or economic recovery and development measures.

Table 4: References to sexual and/or gender-based violence in peace agreements concluded from 1992 to 2008

Conflict	Agreement type and date	Where is sexual violence (or GBV) mentioned?
Burundi	Ceasefire agreement (CFA), cessation of hostilities (COH), comprehensive peace agreement (CPA) – 2000	Prohibited act of a ceasefire or cessation of hostilities
	COH, CFA – 2002	Prohibited act of a ceasefire or cessation of hostilities
	COH, CFA – 2006	Prohibited act of a ceasefire or cessation of hostilities
Indonesia–Aceh	CFA, COH – 2002	Prohibited act of a ceasefire or cessation of hostilities
DRC	CFA – 1999	Prohibited act of a ceasefire or cessation of hostilities
	Interim agreement – 2001	Protection of civilians
	CPA – 2003	DDR Justice
Sudan–Nuba Mountains	COH, CFA – 2002	Prohibited act of a ceasefire or cessation of hostilities
Sudan–Darfur	CPA – 2006	Prohibited act of a ceasefire or cessation of hostilities Monitoring and verification of CFA Protection of civilians and security arrangements
Nepal	CPA – 2006	Human rights, rule of law
	Implementation agreement – 2006	Prohibited act of a ceasefire or cessation of hostilities Security arrangements
The Philippines	CPA – 1998	Human rights and rule of law
Uganda	Implementation agreement – 2007	Justice provisions
	Implementation agreement – 2008	Justice provisions
	Implementation agreement – 2008	DDR
Guatemala	Sub-agreement – 1995	Human rights, rule of law
	Implementation agreement – 1996	Human rights, rule of law
Mexico–Chiapas	Implementation agreement – 1996	Human rights, rule of law

Some peace processes, like Guatemala, Burundi, Sudan–Darfur and Uganda, stand out from the rest in their systematic inclusion of gender-related and gender-specific content throughout the text of the peace accords. This logically leads to two conclusions that deserve further reflection and research. On one hand, it is by no means a coincidence that in these four peace processes, women participated significantly in the proceedings and had ways of tabling their recommendations, albeit using a variety of routes, as described in Section 2. Thus, a connection exists between women’s participation and the quality of peace agreements. One can infer that greater women’s engagement in peace talks will, unsurprisingly, produce better agreements for women. On the other hand, the agreements of both the Guatemala and Burundi peace processes have suffered from delayed implementation, and neither the Darfur Peace Agreement, which was signed only by the Government of Sudan and one of the rebel factions, nor the Comprehensive Peace Agreement for Uganda, which was signed in Juba by the Government, but not by the LRA, have been implemented. This sobering reality will be addressed in the final section of this paper, as more research is needed on the implementation of the gender provisions of peace agreements, and greater attention must be paid to the connections between women’s participation in peace processes and the implementation phase, rather than to the textual inclusion of specific language provisions in the accords.

### Examples of gender-related language in post-resolution 1325 (2000) peace agreements

#### Darfur Peace Agreement (CPA): on security arrangements (5 May 2006).

“The Parties support the participation of a greater number of women in the (ceasefire monitoring and verification) mechanisms.”

“A significant number of GoS [Government of Sudan] Police, Movements’ Police Liaison Officers and AMIS[African Union Mission in Sudan] Civilian Police officers shall be women; they shall have specialist gender units to work with women and children; and all their investigations and monitoring shall include at least one woman.”

“Reform of selected security institutions shall be in accordance with the following: e) they shall include women in all ranks and shall have specific sections to address the particular needs of women and children with respect to personal security and law enforcement.”

“AMIS Civilian Police together with GoS Police and Movements’ Police Liaison Officers in their respective areas of control, shall establish separate police counters for the reporting of crimes

committed against women, and women police personnel should staff these counters.”

#### Inter-Congolese Negotiations: The Final Act—Sun City Agreement, DRC (2 April 2003).

“The mandate of this organ (a national monitoring body for human rights) will be to... create a commission for the protection of women and children with the mandate to denounce all forms of violence specifically perpetrated against women and children, the elderly and persons living with a handicap.”

#### Côte d’Ivoire, 2006 Implementation Agreement (Security Council resolution 1721)

“Encourages the Prime Minister to seek, as appropriate, the active involvement of civil society in moving the peace process forward, and urges the Ivorian parties, the High Representative for the Elections together with UNOCI [United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire] to take into account the rights and resources of women and of gender considerations as set out in resolution 1325 (2000) as cross-cutting issues in the implementation of the peace process including through the consultations with local and international women’s groups.”

#### Sudan Comprehensive Agreement (May 2006).

“The Parties recognize that women are under-represented in government institutions and decision-making structures and that there is need for special measures to ensure women’s equal and effective participation in decision making at all levels.”

“Reserve certain posts in the National Civil Service exclusively for qualified women, particularly those from the less developed areas such as Darfur. Special measures shall be taken to ensure the participation of women in the civil service.”

#### Sudan Comprehensive Agreement (May 2006).

“The women of Darfur are involved in all areas of activity and constitute the bulk of the labor force, especially in the agricultural and animal resource sectors. In addition, women are heads of households, particularly among refugees, the internally displaced, and migrants. Women’s situation in all these areas has been worsened by the war, which has had a particularly deleterious impact on women and children, especially in relation to their means of livelihood. There is a need, therefore, for a special focus on the specific situation of women and for providing concrete measures to address their concerns, as well as ensuring their equal and effective participation in committees, commissions and bodies established pursuant to this Agreement.”

“The Darfur Reconstruction and Development Fund shall develop special mechanisms to address the specific needs of women. These mechanisms shall cover, but [are] not limited to, creation of investment opportunities, enhancement of productive capacities, provision of credit, production inputs and capacity building for women.

“The relevant authorities, with the assistance of the AU and the international community, shall protect the returning displaced persons from all forms of harassment, coercion, informal ‘taxation’ or confiscation of property. In such exercise, special attention to the protection of displaced women from all forms of harassment, exploitation, and gender-based violence, is essential.”

#### Uganda Implementation Agreement (19 February 2008).

“To inquire into human rights violations committed during the conflict, giving particular attention to the experiences of women and children; ...to make provision for witness protection, especially for children and women; ...to make special provision for cases involving gender-based violence.”

“All bodies implementing the Agreement shall establish internal procedures and arrangements for protecting and ensuring the participation of victims, traumatized individuals, women, children, persons with disabilities, and victims of sexual violence in proceedings.”

“The Government shall, in consultation with relevant interlocutors, examine the practices of traditional justice mechanisms in affected areas, with a view to identifying the most appropriate roles for such mechanisms. In particular, it shall consider the role and impact of the process on women and children.”

#### Uganda Implementation Agreement (22 February 2008).

“In the appointment of members and staff of any implementation bodies envisaged by this Agreement, overriding consideration shall be given to the competences and skills required for the office, sensitivity to the candidate’s knowledge of the affected areas, and gender balance.”

#### Liberia Comprehensive Agreement (2003).

“The Parties shall reflect gender balance in all elective and non-elective appointments within the National Transitional Government of Liberia.”

#### Burundi, Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Burundi and the Palipehutu–FNL [Forces nationales de libération] (September 2006):

“Cessation of all acts of violence against the civilian population: acts of vengeance; summary executions; torture; harassment; detention and persecution of civilians on the basis of ethnic

origin; religious beliefs; and or political affiliation; arming of civilians; use of child soldiers; sexual violence; sponsoring or promotion of terrorist or genocide ideologies.”

#### Uganda, Implementation Agreement on DDR (29 February 2008).

“The CMT[spell out in square brackets] shall draw on UN DDR, World Bank and other technical expertise to make further arrangements for: c) protection from sexual violence or abuse, appropriate services for pregnant women and lactating mothers, and adequate presence of female staff.”

#### Somalia, “Statement on Adoption of the Road map and Somalia End of Transition Road map” (11 September 2011)

“5. The Meeting considered four priority tasks for ending the Transition before 20 August 2012, namely: Security, Constitution, Reconciliation and Good Governance, and adopted the Roadmap outlined in Annex 1 and agreed to the following principles for its implementation:

Somali Ownership: The TFG shall lead the process of the implementation of the Roadmap, working with TFP, regional entities, and all sectors of society, including women, business community, religious leaders, elders and youth.

Committee of Somali Experts (maximum 9 persons including up to 4 women) appointed by 19 Sep 2011 to support the preparation of Draft Constitution.

Appoint Joint Committee (TGF, TFP, Regional Administrations, Experts, CSO representatives – Maximum 15 persons including 5 women) by 19 Sep 2011 to undertake preparations for adoption of the Draft Constitution.

Appoint Joint Committee (TFG, TFP, Regional Administrations, Civil Society, and Experts – not more than 15 persons including 5 women) by 19 Sep 2011 to consult and prepare recommendations and modalities for establishing a new Federal Parliament under a new Federal Constitution. The size and criteria of the new parliament shall be determined by the Constituent Assembly. All Federal States must be based on the Transitional Federal Charter. The Government shall encourage the formation of new Federal States based on the TFC.

Appoint Competent Members of an Interim Independent Electoral Commission (maximum 9 persons and up to 4 women) by 19 Sep 2011 to undertake preparations for elections.

Appoint Competent Members of an Interim Independent Anti-Corruption Commission (maximum 9 persons including 4 women) by 19 Nov. 2011.”

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

**GIVEN THE LOW NUMBER OF FEMALE PARTICIPANTS IN FORMAL PEACE TALKS, THE DIFFICULTIES WOMEN IN CIVIL SOCIETY HAVE EXPERIENCED IN TRYING TO ENGAGE EFFECTIVELY IN PEACE PROCESSES, AND THE PATCHY USE OF A GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN THE DRAFTING OF PEACE AGREEMENTS,** at a very minimum, the following five suggested measures should be established and achieved in the next five years. They are modest measures that ought to have been in place already, providing only more reason to avoid compromise or delay.

First, the United Nations—as well as regional organizations that broker peace deals—must have a standardized protocol that ensures engagement of women’s civil society groups in formal peace negotiations. This should not be done ad hoc and late in the game; it should be automatic and should regularize women’s participation from the start. Women’s civil society groups should devote their energies to becoming the most effective participants possible at peace talks rather than spending that time begging for inclusion. This is especially crucial in an environment in which peace negotiations begin at an earlier phase of the conflict and take place faster than they did two or three decades ago. For each process, the UN should establish and support context-appropriate structures for consultation with women’s civil society organizations, and these should be activated before substantive negotiations begin. Women participants should be able to channel their input directly into the formal peace talks for consideration by the parties, the mediator and the facilitator. As described above, in Guatemala, the women’s sector within the Assembly of Civil Society was able to include its recommendations in the formal discussion because there was a person officially designated with that function as part of the structure of the peace talks. In too many peace processes, women’s groups gravitate around the peace talks without an established channel to influence them. Sometimes, civil society representatives will be assigned by the mediator in sub-working groups dealing with key issues relevant to their constituencies. In recent peace talks in the Ogoni region of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, for example, the general discussion of the plenary moved onto technical working groups, in which trade unions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focused on development were tasked with negotiating development plans with the Government, conflict resolution NGOs were tasked with working with the military on security issues, and so on.<sup>30</sup> This is not a bad solution for women’s groups: although ideally they should be able to mainstream gender across a wide variety of issues, at minimum they might be able to exert extraordinary influence in a thematic area of importance, such as human rights, especially

in contexts in which the voice of women might be diluted if they are the minority at every table.

Second, when performing a support role to a peace process, the UN, the group of Friends of Member States, or other mediation actors should allocate specific funding aimed at increasing women’s participation in parties’ delegations and provide incentives for greater representation of women in negotiating teams. It has been suggested that donor countries could make this happen by offering to pay for an extra seat for all negotiating parties on the condition that it was filled by a woman.<sup>31</sup> Many of the Member States that appear most frequently in Contact Groups and Groups of Friends, and invest heavily in diplomacy and conflict resolution, are also Friends of resolution 1325 (2000), could collaborate to exert leverage as sponsors of talks to raise the level of women’s participation.

Third, women and gender experts should be involved in technical work around every component of peace deals, including cease-fire-monitoring agreements, security sector reform and DDR, provisions on justice and reparations, socio-economic recovery and wealth-sharing agreements, and post-agreement governance reform. Both gender balance and gender expertise are at issue here. This means that as well as gender experts, women with specific technical expertise on various subjects should be part of mediation support teams. To give an indication of their availability—or at least their existence—a study found that of 434 individuals working in 16 major research centers on conflict resolution and peace, almost half (47 per cent) were women.<sup>32</sup> It could help enormously to have lawyers with gender expertise drafting the actual words of the agreements, for example. In addition, gender expertise—which can be supplied by men too—is needed to ensure that all aspects of a peace accord support gender equality and women’s rights. According to the Human Security Report in 2009, peace processes have improved with practice, but they are still very fragile and vulnerable to reversal, and their potential will depend heavily on early and effective implementation. This makes the implementation sub-agreements, which do



Sudanese women and girls march in El Fasher, North Darfur, to celebrate International Women’s Day, in many places the day’s 100th anniversary. The theme this year: “Equal Access to Education, Training, Science and Technology”. Credit: UN Photo/Olivier Chassot

not receive the attention that ceasefires or comprehensive peace agreements do, especially important, as well as expertise in transitions and state-building with a gender perspective.

Fourth, both male and female mediators should receive gender-awareness training and briefing packages before beginning their assignment, ready with examples of gender-responsive language, best practice, ways of engaging with women’s civil society and a context-specific analysis of women’s situation. Since January 2011, UN WOMEN and the Department of Political Affairs have been implementing a joint global strategy on gender and mediation to achieve greater effectiveness of UN Mediation efforts through the increased participation of women and strengthened capacity to address gender issues in peace processes. This has already led

to the generation of guidance material on gender and mediation, trainings for mediation experts and gender experts on procedural and substantive aspects of women’s engagement in peace processes, and strengthened coalition-building and information-sharing amongst women’s peacebuilding organizations.<sup>33</sup> But all these positive results need to be more consistently acknowledged and supported to allow for significant progress in advancement of women’s rights and participation in peace talks in the coming years.

And fifth, women’s participation in peace processes costs money. Travelling, lodging, childcare, capacity-building and physical protection are all expensive. Donors who say they are committed to women’s meaningful engagement in peace talks should

earmark a significant percentage of their financial support to peace negotiations for women. Only then will we be able to harness the potential of women's peace coalitions, including cross-national coalitions, as well as women in the Diaspora, and move from ad hoc trainings and consultations to more meaningful capacity-building and engagement. Given that the existence of a vibrant women's coalition does not guarantee that it will be given access to the formal negotiations, it would be ideal to secure those channels of access before convening large coalitions or forums of women or supporting their activities with regard to the peace talks. For example, UNIFEM (now part of UN WOMEN) convened five hundred women in Aceh in 2000 and four hundred women in 2005 for the first and second women's congresses, but their impact on the peace process and the content of the agreements is unclear. Unlike in Uganda, where women had access to the negotiators and a gender adviser in the office of the Special Envoy, Acehnese women did not have a direct entry point.

The effectiveness of parallel civil society forums drops dramatically if they begin when formal talks are already at an advanced stage.<sup>34</sup> Finally, placing gender experts in strategic positions within the formal peace talks, including at the technical level of the mediator's office, the facilitator and the negotiating parties' delegations, or establishing a system by which to stay informed about the process and be able to feedback women's recommendations to all actors are more effective strategies than spending time and energy in obtaining observer status or non-speaking seats at the peace table itself, which have more than once been awarded only at a very late stage of the negotiation.

Women's absence in peace processes cannot be explained by their alleged lack of experience in conflict resolution or negotiations. Instead, there has been a lack of effort to integrate them in formal peace processes. Even firm believers in gender equality and women's rights might have residual doubts about some of these recommendations, not out of a belief that gender issues are secondary and should not be prioritized, but because of a long-running perception that women's participation and the inclusion of gender issues can be detrimental to the success of peace negotiations. Parties might object to a female mediator, for example. That is indeed a possibility, but disagreements over the choice of mediator or mediation team have been among the leading causes of negotiation failure for many years, while mediators have invariably been male. Parties might object to the inclusion of women's civil society groups and the scrutiny brought by them on atrocities committed against women, but they generally do not have an objection to civil society involvement per se, balking instead at specific groups. Women's groups

## WOMEN'S ABSENCE IN PEACE PROCESSES CANNOT BE EXPLAINED BY THEIR ALLEGED LACK OF EXPERIENCE IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION OR NEGOTIATIONS. INSTEAD, THERE HAS BEEN A LACK OF EFFORT TO INTEGRATE THEM IN FORMAL PEACE PROCESSES.

generally enjoy a comparatively higher perception of neutrality than other civil society groups, especially when they are broad and representative. One solution is to budget for a number of civil society invitations for each party, and reserve a few invitations for the mediator to use at his or her discretion, which could be used to invite women. Finally, women's demands could be at odds with one or both parties to the negotiations, and thus represent a set of demands that risk jeopardizing the agreement.

However, nothing indicates that women's demands would be less amenable to discussion and negotiation than many other provisions that are routinely included in the text of peace agreements.

While there are countless examples in which peace processes have broken down due to myriad factors—including disagreement over the choice of mediator, internal dissidence within armed groups, ceasefire violations, delays in the implementation of some of their components, such as demobilization, and irreconcilable differences over substantive topics, such as self-government—a case in which peace negotiations were derailed due to women's demands has yet to be discovered.

Endnotes:

- 1 Consistent data of numbers of women in peace negotiations are seriously lacking. Therefore this research had to limit itself to a representative sample of 31 peace processes for which some data were available.
- 2 Luciak, Ilija A., January 2004, 'Gender Equality in the Salvadoran Transition,' in *Latin American Perspectives* 26, No. 2, 1999, p. 45, quoted in Pampell Conaway, Camille, and Martinez, Salomé, 'Adding Value: Women's Contributions to Reintegration and Reconstruction in El Salvador,' Hunt Alternatives Fund, Washington DC, available online: [http://www.huntalternatives.org/download/14\\_adding\\_value\\_women\\_s\\_contributions\\_to\\_reintegration\\_and\\_reconstruction\\_in\\_el\\_salvador.pdf](http://www.huntalternatives.org/download/14_adding_value_women_s_contributions_to_reintegration_and_reconstruction_in_el_salvador.pdf).
- 3 Page, Michelle, Whitman, Tobie, Anderson, Cecilia, October 2009, 'Bringing Women Into Peace Negotiations', Institute for Inclusive Security, *Strategies for Policymakers* No. 2, Washington DC, pp 13–16
- 4 *Ibid.*, pp 5–8
- 5 UNIFEM (now part of UN WOMEN), October 2005, *Securing the Peace: Guiding the International Community Towards Women's Effective Participation Throughout Peace Processes*, UNIFEM, New York
- 6 See, for example, Wanis-St. John, Anthony, Kew, Darren, 2008, 'Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Confronting Exclusion,' in *International Negotiation* 13, pp 11–36
- 7 Some of UN WOMEN's publications have been entirely devoted to this issue, including *Women at the Peace Table: Making a Difference* (2000) and *Securing the Peace* (2005). Additionally, the theme of the 48th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2004 was devoted to women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management, conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding, and it was preceded by a preparatory expert group meeting in Canada in 2003 on peace agreements as a means for promoting gender equality and ensuring participation of women.
- 8 FISAS, Vicenc, 2008, *Anuario 2008 de Procesos de Paz, Escola de Cultura de Pau, Barcelona*, pp 20–22
- 9 DPA/MSU informal communication, April 2012.
- 10 Østby, Gudrun, 2008, "Inequalities, the Political Environment and Civil Conflict: Evidence from 55 Developing Countries", Stewart, Frances, (ed.) *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp 136-159
- 11 DFID, 2011, *The Politics of Poverty: Elites, Citizens and States. Findings from ten years of DFID-funded research on Governance and Fragile States 2011-2010. A Synthesis paper*, London
- 12 UNIFEM (2010), "Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Peace Negotiations: Implementing Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008)" in *Collection of Resources on Women, Peace and Security. Report on the high-level colloquium organized by DPA, DPKO, OCHA, UNDP, and UNIFEM (now UN Women) on behalf of UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict and in partnership with the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (June 22-23 2009)*.
- 13 UN DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS, 'Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements', UNITED NATIONS, New York. See: [http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/undpa/main/issues/sexual\\_violence](http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/undpa/main/issues/sexual_violence)
- 14 The Elders are an independent group of global leaders who provide their experience to support peace negotiations and peacebuilding. This group includes Martti Ahtisaari, Kofi Annan, Ela Bhatt, Gro Brundtland, Lakhdar Brahimi, Fernando Cardoso, Mary Robinson, Desmond Tutu, Graça Machel, Jimmy Carter, Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi.
- 15 Mason, Simon, 2009, *Insider Mediators: Exploring Their Key Role in Informal Peace Processes*, Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, Berlin

- 16 Carnevale, Peter J. and Choi, Dong-Won, 2000, 'Culture in the Mediation of International Disputes', in *International Journal of Psychology* 35/2, pp 105-10. See also: Wehr, Paul, 1996, 'Mediating Conflict in Central America', in *Journal of Peace Research* 28/1, pp 85-98
- 17 ITTO, Anne, 2006, 'Guests at the Table? The Role of Women in Peace Processes', *Conciliation Resources*
- 18 These processes include Cyprus, Geneva Talks on Georgia, Guyana and Yemen.
- 19 The Geneva Talks represent the official peace negotiation platform and are in place since the signature of a ceasefire agreement after the August 2008 crisis.
- 20 Marhaban, Shadia, Statement at the Security Council Arria Formula Meeting on Women's role in mediation and conflict resolution, 8th March 2012
- 21 For further information on this case, see Page, Michelle, Whitman, Tobie, Anderson, Cecilia, October 2009, *op. cit.*
- 22 UN-INSTRAW (now part of UN WOMEN), 2008, 'Women, Peace and Security in Somalia: Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325,' UN-INSTRAW (now part of UN WOMEN), available online: <http://www.un-instraw.org/data/media/documents/Somalia%20background%20paper.pdf>.
- 23 Directed by Gini Reticker and produced by Abigail Disney, this documentary premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2008 and went on to win numerous awards.
- 24 See Kamaruzzaman, Suraiya, 2008, 'Agents for Change: The Roles of Women in Aceh's Peace Process,' *Conciliation Resources*
- 25 Since May 2011, the UN Special Envoy to Yemen, Mr. Jamal Benomar has regularly met with representatives of women's groups to canvas their views and concerns and urged parties to negotiations and national dialogue to include women on their delegations. While both parties expressed their disagreement with the mediator's suggestions regarding women's inclusion, his efforts have certainly resulted in heightened awareness amongst women's groups of their right to be involved, and of the imperative of seeking common ground across a range of women's groups in order to make a decisive impact on the forthcoming national dialogues. As a result of these efforts, the 2011 Yemen Transition Agreement called for women to be represented appropriately in key institutions, including due consideration for the representation of women in the Government of National Unity, and the National Dialogue Conference.
- 26 See Bell, Christine and O'Rourke, Catherine, 2010, 'Peace Agreements or Piece of Paper? The Impact of UNSC Resolution 1325 on Peace Processes and their Agreements', in *International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 59, pp 941-980
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 These keywords include mentions of "women", "gender", "gender-based violence", "sex", etc.
- 29 Art 4.1 a) of the 2009 "Peace Agreement between the Government of DRC and the CNDP".
- 30 See Pfaffenholz, Thania, Kew, Darren, Wanis-St. John, Anthony, 2006; 'Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Why, Whether and How They Could be Involved', Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, accessed 7 July 2012: <http://www.hdcentre.org/files/CivilSocietyandPeaceNegotiations.pdf>.
- 31 See Page, Michelle, Whitman, Tobie, Anderson, Cecilia, October 2009, *op. cit.*
- 32 FISAS, Vicenc, 2008, *op. cit.*, pp 20–22
- 33 See the online UN WOMEN database of Women's Peacebuilding Organizations: <https://peaceorganizations.unwomen.org/>
- 34 See Pfaffenholz, Thania, Kew, Darren, Wanis-St. John, Anthony, 2008, 'Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Why, Whether and How They Could be Involved', Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.





United Nations Entity for Gender Equality  
and the Empowerment of Women