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# PRACTICE SERIES

**9**

# Gender-inclusive peacemaking

**Strategies for mediation practitioners**

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The Mediation Practice Series is a project of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD). We value the feedback of mediation practitioners and researchers on the format and content of this publication. Please write to mediationsupport@hdcentre.org for suggestions and feedback.

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# Foreword

Despite the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 more than two decades ago, significant progress towards ensuring the meaningful participation of women and inclusion of gender issues in peace processes is still lacking. While abundant resources are available about "why" peace efforts should be more inclusive, practical and accessible guidance about "how" to achieve this remains scarce.

This publication addresses this gap by providing mediation teams and organisations with ideas, options and strategies for embedding gender-inclusivity in their peacemaking efforts. It also encourages mediation organisations to turn their gaze inwards and reflect on internal culture, processes and practices that need to change for the peacemaking sector to become gender-inclusive itself.

At the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), we are assessing how we can improve our organisational and peacemaking practices to be more gender-inclusive. This publication provides many options and ideas to boost our efforts, and those of the peacemaking field. It is my hope that this guidance will encourage honest self-reflection, and promote positive change in our methods for long-term inclusive peacemaking and mediation processes.

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# Background

The Mediation Practice Series (MPS) was initiated in 2008 as part of efforts by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) to support the mediation community with data, analysis, and guidance on good practice. In recent years, the international community has significantly strengthened the quality and quantity of knowledge and ideas available to mediators and their teams. The MPS series contributes to this effort and the improvement of mediation practice.

Each MPS offers readers a concise overview of a subject area, evidence and practice trends, alongside challenges and options for action. Although these publications cannot replace practical experience, it is our hope that they can contribute to a more systematic learning process. The series is publicly available on HD's website in a range of languages to promote accessibility.

*Gender-inclusive peacemaking: strategies for mediation practitioners* is the ninth MPS publication. It builds on the author's experience as a practitioner over two decades and was enriched by consultations, interviews, and peer review by practitioners, donors and analysts. For an overview of the methods used, please see Annex 1.

**The Mediation Practice Series**

1. External actors in mediation (also available in French)

2. Engaging with armed groups (also available in French)

3. Negotiating ceasefires (also available in French and Spanish)

4. Broadening participation in peace processes
   (also available in French; forthcoming in Spanish and Arabic)

5. Conflict analysis: the foundation for effective action
   (also available in French)

6. Supporting a national dialogue
   (also available in French; forthcoming in Spanish and Arabic)

7. Valuing peace: delivering and demonstrating mediation results
   (also available in French)

8. Peacemaking and new technologies (also forthcoming in French)

9. Gender-inclusive peacemaking: strategies for mediation
   practitioners (also forthcoming in French, Spanish and Arabic)

# Contents

# Essential points for practitioners

- The relationship between gender inequalities, armed violence, and violent conflict cannot be ignored. Inclusive political analysis enables greater identification of these linkages, and options for addressing them.

- Mediation strategies that systematically integrate gender perspectives, interrogate gender power dynamics, and include women in substantive roles can contribute to a more credible and, arguably, more sustainable peace.

- Effective gender inclusion in peacemaking demands the dismantling of bias and the transformation of patriarchal logic and systems, which are also damaging and restrictive to many men as well as sexual, gender and other minorities. This requires transparent long-term commitments and the allocation of appropriate resources (financial and human), as well as more diverse and accountable leadership of mediation organisations.

- Incremental inclusion is, at best, an ineffective tactic and, at worst, a successful blocking strategy that consolidates gender inequality. Peacemaking tends to start with a narrow, elite male-dominated group of conflict parties and mediators who establish the logic of women's exclusion early on by using a discourse of promised inclusion at a 'later', 'better' stage. This promise is rarely realised.

- Taking a layered approach to identifying powerholders and influencers is a fundamental starting point for more inclusive process design. This entails 'finding' women who are active in public life at various layers and sectors of society, not just at the elite levels.

- Agile funding mechanisms at the country level can enable women's participation in decision-making and decision-shaping events or learning opportunities, and lower practical barriers to inclusion.

- To move beyond male-dominated networks and referral pools, mediation entities should reassess recruitment strategies, draw on networks of women experts and issue regular calls for feminist analysts on relevant countries and topics.

- Ensure zero-tolerance of sexism and sexual harassment within mediation organisations. Invest in credible reporting channels.

- Make co-mediation by women and men routine as this can contribute to gender parity and may lead to more consideration of gender perspectives.

- Implement quotas, with appropriate support for women at all levels of a peace process including implementation mechanisms: without decisive interventions to disrupt male dominance of decision-making, women will struggle to reach a critical mass to shape, influence and set political agendas. Each effort to do this, even when not accepted by the parties, helps women move closer to a tipping point.

- Bring women together before formal workshops, dialogue sessions and other meetings as this provides space for women to prepare to navigate male-dominated spaces where other hierarchies and cultural restrictions may also inhibit their participation.

- Aim for specific gender-responsive commitments in peace agreements wherever possible. These specify who will undertake the action, at what levels, and for what purpose. Frame any budgetary allocation as a minimum so that it can be expanded over time.

# Gender-inclusive peacemaking

## Strategies for mediation practitioners

## 1 | Introduction

The participation of women and the inclusion of gender issues in peace processes is marked by a mixture of frustration and half-measures, with pockets of progress and inspiration. A central reason for this poor track record is that peacemaking often starts with a male-dominated group of conflict parties and mediators, with the promise of 'bringing women in later'. However, the relationship between gender inequalities and armed violence is increasingly clear[1], as is evidence that incrementalism is not an effective method to secure gender inclusion.[2]

It is often said that focusing on gender equality in peacemaking is not just a 'good thing' or the 'right thing' to do, it is the smart thing to do. Yet mediators lament the dearth of accessible guidance to move from the 'why' and 'should' to the 'how' in terms of achieving gender inclusion in processes and outcomes. Concurrently Women, Peace and Security (WPS) advocates and analysts decry the lack of transformative progress.

This paper has private diplomacy and non-government actors in mind, although many suggestions are relevant to those in multilateral, donor and regional organisations. Drawing on two decades as an armed violence reduction specialist, mediation and conflict adviser, analyst and programme manager, the author reflects on key challenges and offers practitioners ideas for action that can make a practical difference.

### International frameworks

The global WPS agenda – which is grounded in an array of Security Council Resolutions (and those subsequently catalysed in other regional and multilateral organisations) plus policy commitments from states, international non-governmental and civil society organisations – is one part of the international frameworks for women's rights and gender equality.

Following hundreds of years of global feminist mobilisation, the first formal commitment agreed was the 1979 Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This was followed by the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) which identified 12 priority areas to accelerate the implementation of CEDAW, including a focus on 'Women and Armed Conflict'.

At their roots, CEDAW and the BPFA seek transformation of inequitable gender power relations, and both played a decisive role in shaping the United Nations (UN) Security Council agenda from 2000, starting with the landmark 1325 Resolution on Women, Peace and Security.

The nine UN Security Council Resolutions on WPS since then span women's political participation, relief, recovery and rehabilitation concerns, and protection from violence and intimidation. In addition, UN Security Council Resolution 2250 – which launched the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda – has added a sharper focus on the political agency and influence of young women and men as well as sexual and gender minorities. Yet, much of the WPS policy agenda has become delinked from feminist and social justice movements seeking structural change in patriarchal and exclusive societies and institutions.[3]

### Global dynamics

Gender inclusion and women's political participation in peace processes takes place in a tumultuous context of complex political, social and cultural dynamics across the world. This includes the shrinking political space for civil society as well as increasing attacks

on, and the intimidation of, women's rights advocates and feminist mobilisers, alongside journalists and progressive parliamentarians, around the world.[4]

The rise of violent extremism, nationalism, populist governments and authoritarianism are other decisive developments that are closing spaces for diverse voices and approaches.[5] Fake news, 'uncivil speech' and hate speech all fuel an era of toxic and divisive local, national and global politics. These 'currents' weaken democratic processes and human rights and, at times, undermine the peacemaking efforts of multilateral institutions such as the UN.[6]

The traditional 'peace table' model barely exists anymore. Conflict parties are increasingly fragmented and hard to engage. Efforts to end war and violence are messy and rarely associated with formal linear peace talks. This can have a positive effect, providing more opportunities to reimagine contributions and roles in peace processes, and to those overlooked in these elite spaces dominated by older men. Women, indigenous people, sexual and gender minorities, excluded religions, younger people, and others are staking claims to these processes.

**Why this publication is needed**

In a context of political turbulence and patchy progress on gender inclusion, practitioners need to think differently about peacemaking. As peace processes become more challenging, initiatives are needed which stimulate critical thinking, change restrictive gender power dynamics, and engage with a multitude of views about inclusive peace among mediation and peacemaking actors (see Figure 1).

In today's fragmented conflicts, effective and inclusive peace processes that are representative of wider groups beyond armed actors and elite forces are essential. Research highlights the connections between more gender-inclusive processes and more sustainable peace, driven by the strong interest in preventing conflict relapse.[7] At the very least, international actors must ensure that they do not undermine feminist mobilisation and the difficult – and often dangerous – efforts underway in many conflict-affected contexts to

**Figure 1: Conversations about inclusive peace processes**[8]

advance gender equality and secure the rights of women as well as gender and sexual minorities, which are prerequisites for fairer and more equitable societies.

### Good practice, best practice: what is the difference?

It is challenging to declare definitively what is good practice on gender inclusion in peace processes as change is largely incremental and timeframes are long. The examples in this paper are not exhaustive or definitive. They are intended to be sources of inspiration and to invigorate those involved in peacemaking. Ideas outlined in this paper should not be replicated without tailoring them to the needs of the context. Disrupting hostile, inequitable and dangerous gender norms requires nuanced approaches that are politically calibrated. Consequently, this paper does not refer to 'best practice' and, instead, suggests some decisive actions which represent 'good practice' or a minimum level of effort.

## 2 | Know your terms: Key concepts

Effective gender inclusion demands dismantling bias and transforming patriarchal systems which are also damaging to many men as well as sexual and gender minorities. This requires transparent long-term commitments, allocating appropriate resources, and diverse and accountable leadership in mediation organisations. It also requires different approaches and techniques, and appreciation of relevant concepts and terms, some of which are outlined below.

**Applying a 'gender lens':** Paying attention to the socially-constructed expectations, limitations and differences imposed on women, men, girls and boys from birth. Such gender norms influence behaviour, decisions and life trajectories.

**Gender mainstreaming:** Integrating gender perspectives across sectors, law, and policies to promote gender equality. Gender mainstreaming is a continuous process with a focus on internal and external systems and processes.[9]

**Gender-sensitive:** Considering gender power dynamics and gender (in)equalities and the differences between men, women, girls and boys, and sexual and gender minorities while developing policy or analysis, designing processes, drafting laws, allocating resources or evaluating the impact of decisions.

**Gender-responsive:** Turning consideration of gender perspectives into actions that can be monitored, evaluated and refined over time. Some gender-responsive techniques include establishing gender quotas and undertaking gender reviews to pinpoint blockages and opportunities.

**Gender-inclusive:** The combination of gender-sensitive 'ideas' and gender-responsive 'actions'. A gender-inclusive peace agreement, for example, might be one that is written in gender-sensitive language with specific provisions to advance women's political inclusion and the integration of gender perspectives into decision-making processes and outcomes.

**Intersectionality:** Consideration of how identities intersect and influence each other, and how this may lead to multiple forms of oppression and discrimination, as well as strengths and capacities.[10] For mediation actors, this requires analysing power variables and aspects of identity (such as sexuality, gender, ethnicity, class, age, disability, location), and ways in which these can collide, clash and combine.

**Representation:** Considering the presence of people from underrepresented groups and communities (for example, persons from religious minorities in parliament) or advancing the interests of a particular group (for example, a group of women representing 'women' more widely).

**Critical mass:** Understanding the conditions in which underrepresented groups (such as women in male-dominated parliaments) can gather momentum and exert influence more effectively.[11] It is generally understood to be achieved at around the 30% mark which is why women's representation claims are typically framed this way.

**Meaningful participation:** Patchy implementation of the WPS agenda has led practitioners and advocates to emphasise the *quality of participation*.[12] Over the past two decades the qualifier of 'meaningful' has been increasingly associated with the participation of women in peace processes. This is far more than the numbers of women involved in an initiative. Key elements include being present to seize opportunities; drawing on knowledge, networks and confidence; deploying political agency and being a part of setting agendas; and conveying gender perspectives and women's rights concerns as defined by broader social and political movements. Figure 2 illustrates these four dimensions and provides examples of what this might mean for mediation practitioners.

# 3 | Actions to strengthen gender-inclusive mediation support

Mediation actors focus on managing asymmetries between conflict parties and addressing historical disadvantage that impedes effective peace process participation and negotiation. This is directed to armed groups and state actors who certainly have significant differences affecting, and limiting, their engagement and respective capacities to negotiate effectively. So, too, do women – both in formal conflict parties (armed actors and governments) and in civil society. Mediation strategies that systematically integrate gender perspectives, interrogate gender power dynamics and include women in substantive roles can contribute to more credible, and arguably more sustainable, peace and result in a richer array of perspectives in decision-shaping and decision-making processes.

There are, however, significant barriers to women being 'at the table' in many peace processes, which have already been abundantly documented.[13] In addition to direct representation in negotiating parties, there are many other ways women can participate and contribute 'around' processes – as facilitators, mediators, advisers, observers and subject experts. They also contribute through social movements, public protest, advocacy, problem-solving dialogues,

## Figure 2: Elements of meaningful participation

**Example:** Women's rights actors (perhaps with support from mediation actors) identify a concern in the conflict (not necessarily a 'women's issue') & mobilise diverse constituencies on policy actions
➤ **shifting and shaping what is discussed by conflict parties.**

**Example:** Mediation actors provide contextualised learning opportunities for women to hone insights on core public policy concerns (e.g. decentralisation) alongside soft skills (e.g. public speaking, critical gender analysis)
➤ **boosting women's confidence and knowledge.**

**Deploying Agency** through agenda-setting & coalition building.

**Self Efficacy** knowledge and confidence to effectively represent women's rights & interests.

**MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION**

**Being Present,** to seize opportunities to inform, influence and make decisions.

**Exerting Influence** through gender perspectives forged in broader movements.

**Example:** Mediation actors routinely implement reserved seats for women in formal and informal talks and dialogues
➤ **normalising women's presence in male-dominated spaces.**

**Example:** Mediation actors enable spaces for women in formal processes and mechanisms to regularly engage with wider women's groups and movements
➤ **strengthening connections between women across identities and roles.**

**Source note**: This builds on the original graphic developed by UN Women (2018).[14]

consultations and more. Mediation actors have an important part to play in supporting this multiplicity of roles.

There are many practical actions which mediation actors can take in their everyday work to ensure gender-inclusive initiatives and the meaningful participation of women.

**Action 1: Integrate gender perspectives into political analysis**

Political and conflict analysis commonly lacks a gender-sensitive approach and feminist perspectives.[15] Central to gender-sensitive analysis is thinking about who generates analysis, who is asked for their views and who can access the analysis.

There is increasing interest in doing better in terms of political analysis to inform peacemaking interventions. There is also nascent recognition in mediation organisations that feminist and gender-sensitive analysis is a matter of bringing the most rigorous information forward and integrating it into an astute analysis of power, violence and oppression in each context to inform effective mediation and peace process support.

*Central to gender-sensitive analysis is thinking about who generates analysis, who is asked for their views and who can access the analysis.*

As argued by Nagel, "feminist theories offer new perspectives to mainstream conflict research, which needs new theoretical concepts, approaches and arguments, if it wants to evolve and remain relevant."[16] This means moving beyond the 'gender paragraph' (cataloguing women's victimisation, counting women at the peace table, tallying up discriminatory laws and socio-cultural norms yet rarely focusing on masculinities) to an integrated and gender-sensitive analysis of political and economic power relations and situating mediation actors in the frame as well.[17]

Systematic approaches include:

***Who is generating the analysis?*** Practitioners can periodically assess who is developing analysis and issue a call for feminist

researchers and inclusion specialists with country and thematic expertise. They can also build more connections with women from civil society as well as feminist and pro-inclusion peace and security specialists in the Global South, in states seeking to play a greater role in conflict resolution such as Indonesia and in those with strong regional interests such as Turkey, China and Russia. This is especially important for identifying more ways to address dynamics in interstate conflicts and proxy wars, and blockages in the Security Council. To exchange skills and share knowledge, practitioners can consider bringing together local analysts from violence-affected contexts with international specialists, or pair existing (often predominantly male) consultants with a feminist analyst.

Since opportunities to inject gender perspectives into deliberations are typically limited and arise unexpectedly, anticipating future policy topics and being prepared with reliable information is central to effective mediation support. For example, the UN Special Envoy's Office in Yemen commissioned gendered perspectives on themes including security reform and power-sharing in 2020/21 from predominantly female Yemeni analysts to give staff ready access to gender-sensitive data and perspectives.

**Who is being asked for their views?** Analysis may be generated and tested as part of a dialogue process or problem-solving workshop. In this case, injecting gender-specific examples and questions can spark different conversations and connections. Conducting peer reviews is another way to solicit women's views. Practitioners should ensure payment to those without salaried income as their expertise is often predicated on many years of experience. Indeed, women often choose to operate outside of institutions for many of the reasons outlined in this paper.

**Who can access the analysis?** Where analysis can be put in the public domain, practitioners can make sure it is as accessible as possible. Practitioners should aim to present research insights in short, accessible formats, multiple languages, through data visualisation and across multiple platforms. Examples of such public sharing include a feminist conflict analysis undertaken in Myanmar by the then Peace

Support Fund (now Paung Sie Facility) in 2016 and the collective feminist analysis of the conflict in Cameroon spearheaded by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in 2019.[18]

**Action 2: Set and monitor inclusion goals**

Focusing on inclusive processes *and* outcomes in equal measure is important as both dimensions bring benefits and gains, and are interrelated. Setting goals from the start of an initiative can help avoid the 'add women and stir' approach (dropping a few women into male-dominated meetings to avoid criticism or as an afterthought) and may help focus thinking about power and gender hierarchies.

***Start with a gender inclusion review:*** This can be a review of a project, programme, organisation or peace process. It can help identify behaviours and policies that are obstacles to inclusion and devise ways to change them. Such reviews can generate an action plan to strengthen inclusion efforts and opportunities to address negative gendered divisions of labour and roles. Ideally, reviews should be conducted jointly by external specialists and a small internal team, bringing a mixture of fresh perspectives and knowledge of organisational dynamics. The involvement of senior leaders is also paramount to generate buy-in. Practitioners can also build in a reflection on the review (for example, within 12 months) to promote accountability and refine implementation.

## Gender inclusion strategy reviews

In October 2019, the UN Secretary-General committed to a series of gender inclusion strategy sessions in the UN's offices and missions. The UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs has carried out three sessions to date covering Yemen, Afghanistan, and the consequences of the 2008 conflict in Georgia. The processes are led by members of the Standby Team of Mediation Experts together with UN personnel, and are tailored to the type of peace process and the role of the UN entity. They result in an action plan with a review commitment. Importantly, these exercises catalyse reflection on informal entry points for inclusion at the same time as generating more formal commitments.

***Draw on tools to boost goal setting:*** Using the established 'Gender Marker' scoring system can help practitioners to review programmes and projects and set future objectives.[19] This system can prompt practitioners to design projects more inclusively. Organisations should ideally have a two-step process in place so that those who determine their initial score in the design phase are not those who decide the final score.

- Score 3 – Initiatives or projects that have gender inclusion as the principal objective.
- Score 2 – Initiatives or projects that have gender inclusion as a significant objective.
- Score 1 – Initiatives or projects that will contribute in some way to gender inclusion, but not significantly.
- Score 0 – Initiatives or projects that are not expected to contribute to gender inclusion.

## Figure 3: Gender Inclusion Scale

| | |
|---|---|
| Gender negative | Activity or initiative likely to have a negative outcome that aggravates or reinforces existing gender inequalities and norms. |
| Gender blind | Activity or initiative pays no attention to gender dynamics, does not acknowledge the needs of men, women, girls and boys, or populations that are politically and socially excluded but does not specifically exacerbate inequalities. |
| Gender targeted | Activity or initiative focuses on the numeric/physical inclusion of women, men, girls and boys, and populations that are politically and socially excluded. |
| Gender responsive | Activity or initiative addresses the different levels of access of women and men of all ages, genders and sexual minorities to participate and/or be represented but does not necessarily address the root causes of inequalities. |
| Gender transformative | Activity or initiative likely to contribute to changes in negative gender norms, power structures and root causes of gender inequality and discrimination and seeks systemic change. |

The current marker system does not have a score for projects that risk exacerbating gender inequalities (i.e., Score -1 for projects that could reinforce inequalities) and this could be one development to consider. Similarly, a Gender Inclusion Scale can be used when assessing projects and planning activities. Figure 3 focuses on *intended impact*, but it can also be reframed and used as a reporting tool.[20]

**Factor gender inclusion into budgets:** One of the most striking measures of how seriously inclusion is taken is the allocation of funding. Many organisations now have projects focused on gender inclusion, but this is often reliant on project-specific funding, rather than longer-term core funding. From observation, over the past two decades, the movement by most mediation organisations to improve gender inclusion efforts is driven by donors. Given the influence of donors, part of a more consistent approach to gender inclusion would be standardising the quantity of funding allocated to it. In the peace and security budgets of UN entities this typically starts at 15%, although this should be understood as a starting point and not a ceiling. While there is still a clear need to retain flexible funding for peacemaking,[21] donors can (and do) demonstrate their priorities through 'soft earmarking' in which they require mediation organisations to allocate part of their core funding to gender inclusion.

**Appraise inclusion within inclusion:** Operationalise the concept of 'intersectionality' by ensuring inclusion initiatives do not lead to exclusion in other areas, for example in relation to ethnicity, class, gender and sexual identity, ability and religious identity. Thinking about identity layering is part of conflict-sensitivity so ought to be second nature to mediation actors. An example might be ensuring younger women have equitable access to opportunities in youth networks (particularly in contexts where women's household responsibilities can start at a young age). This might involve mapping the skills, expertise, power and influence of younger women or establishing a women's caucus within the network.

**Identify who is accountable for action:** Consider whether the responsibility for promoting gender inclusion within the institution

*Consistent political will and leadership are vital for keeping gender inclusion at the forefront of programming and making it a shared responsibility.*

is limited to a gender adviser or individuals acting as *de facto* internal advocates (who are usually women) – these individuals rarely hold decision-making power, and can be marginalised within organisations for advocating gender inclusion. Consistent political will and leadership are vital for keeping gender inclusion at the forefront of programming and making it a shared responsibility.

### Action 3: Design inclusive initiatives and processes

Actions to reduce the obstacles to women's political participation and the inclusion of gender perspectives hinge on recognition of, and preparedness to reduce, the disproportionate historical advantage many men have in private and public life. Old habits die hard, so vigilance is required to constantly disrupt male reluctance to share space and opportunities with women. Several steps are provided here:

***Identify women operating at various levels:*** Mediation organisations frequently 'look' for women in the spaces and places they

## Identifying less visible women

In 2020, HD initiated a project in the Korean Peninsula. This examined debates and expertise from different perspectives to identify new approaches and pathways to peace. Two key trends stood out: conversations are dominated by men from a few states, and the topics almost solely focus on denuclearisation and sanctions. Staff then sought out women in various sectors across Asia – academics, government officials, humanitarian workers, business figures and members of women's rights groups – to provide relevant and transferable insights. The team mapped key organisations and individuals and chose not to focus solely on directors or project leaders, but those around them, uncovering less visible women. Applying different expertise criteria led to more inclusive process design and generated several promising and creative entry points for pro-peace engagement and confidence building.

perceive as powerful – military forces, certain ministerial posts, business figures. Not only can this result in many women being overlooked, but young men, religious figures, ethnic minorities and many others may be overlooked too. Taking a layered approach to identifying powerholders and influencers is a fundamental starting point for more inclusive process design. This entails 'finding' women who are active in public life, possibly in less visible or obvious roles, and at various layers of society, not just at the elite levels.

***Normalise gender quotas in talks, agreements and implementation mechanisms:*** Gender quotas (a form of Temporary Special Measures permissible under international law as set out in CEDAW, Article 4) are one of the most effective ways to fast-track women's representation. They are relatively well established in the electoral and parliamentary systems of diverse countries to remedy the challenges many women face in reaching public office. They have proved to be a highly effective method for addressing women's under-representation in public life.[22] Mediation practitioners often shy away from quotas in the design of processes and tend to focus on them in provi-

*The more reserved seats and quotas are encouraged by mediation actors, the sooner they will become more accepted as part of process design.*

sions for future electoral reform. This subtly reinforces the faulty logic of incrementalism and the idea that gender inclusion can be left until later.[23] However, evolving efforts to apply quotas in peace talks are emerging, including in the UN-led peace process in Yemen where reserved, non-transferable seats for women in formal delegations have been offered to the parties. These were first offered in late 2018 and, to date, the parties have refused to use them, although this has not been fully tested as the Yemen process has stalled. The more reserved seats and quotas are encouraged by mediation actors, the sooner they will become more accepted as part of process design. Each effort to do this, even when not accepted by the parties, helps increase momentum towards a tipping point.

**Hold pre-meetings with women:** Bringing women of different ages and backgrounds together before formal workshops, dialogue sessions and other meetings provides time and space for women to discuss agenda items and prepare to navigate male-dominated spaces where other hierarchies and cultural restrictions may inhibit participation (such as age, education and class). It can also be an opportunity for the mediator, chair or facilitator to get to know the women participants and learn more about their backgrounds and views. This will enable the facilitator to call on them more readily and naturally in the main meeting.

## Pre-meetings with women

HD's team in Myanmar routinised pre-meetings and parallel meetings in its peace support efforts in a highly conflict-affected state of the country. Staff observed that women largely raised similar issues in pre-meetings as they and others did in the larger, mixed group meetings: the importance of human security; the need to end impunity and violence by armed actors; the desire to engage in dialogue; and the need for assistance for displaced people. A staff member reflected that this does not make the efforts invalid – there was value in convening separate meetings as part of providing space for women to hone their views.

**Co-facilitation and mediation:** The choice of the facilitator and chair of meetings is highly significant as they operate as *de facto* mediators in many contexts. To change the perception that older men with high-level connections are naturally suited to such roles, routinise co-chairing, co-facilitation and co-mediation by women and men. Co-roles contribute to gender parity and may lead to more consideration of gender perspectives. It should, of course, be noted that not all women want, or are well-suited, to being gender-equality advocates, so this should not be assumed. Finding women for these roles is easier than ever with the establishment of various women mediator networks removing the question of 'where are the women?'[24] There are also databases of female peace and security experts to identify women of all ages and backgrounds.[25]

## Co-facilitation in Kenya and Myanmar

Three weeks after the 2008 post-election violence in Kenya, the African Union established a Panel of Eminent African Personalities with a mandate to mediate the crisis. It was chaired by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, former President Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania, and Graça Machel, former public official and First Lady of South Africa.[26] Similarly, the facilitation of formal political dialogue in Myanmar offers another rare and positive example. Although the design of the system was entirely about party representation (ethnic armed groups, political parties, government) the longstanding co-facilitation by two women and one man was in place from 2016.[27]

***Ask women first – to establish women's 'voice' in male-dominated settings:*** When chairing or facilitating a meeting, call on a woman or several women when the discussion opens (for example, after presentations or a speech) to provide the first intervention. This technique establishes women's 'voice' in male-dominated spaces, helping women not only to be seen, but also heard. This technique – referred to here as 'Ask Women First' – can be used in meetings with negotiating parties, in unofficial dialogue events, during staff meetings in mediation organisations, and in any forum where women are in a minority. Wherever possible, give the woman or women advance notice that you would like to call on them. This technique can also be factored into meeting plans, annotated agendas, and in talking points to set the behaviour in place. Additionally, think about where women sit and deliberately place them closer to the facilitator or chair of the meeting wherever possible, so they are more visible. Consider offering coaching on delivering key points and public speaking to bolster women's confidence and self-belief.[28] Use the facilitation techniques of affirming the ideas posed by women, or soliciting their opinions in order to frame their experiences or insights. This will help draw out those whose voices are less well-established or easily sidelined.

***Introduce mechanisms for women's inclusion:*** In response to the exclusion of women from negotiations, mediators have developed

direct and indirect inclusion mechanisms to address the challenge.[29] The most prominent direct mechanisms include gender sub-commissions, which have been utilised twice in recent years: the Colombian Sub-Commission on Gender (discussed below) and the Sri Lankan Subcommittee on Gender Issues (SGI). These sub-commissions represent evolving good practice, as they were linked to the formal process and provided a way to both boost women's representation and bring gender expertise into deliberations. The SGI was endorsed by the parties and comprised of representatives chosen by the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, following its formation during the third round of negotiations.[30] In the absence of independent women delegates, at a minimum this was an alternative forum for discussing gender perspectives. However, the SGI was short-lived due to the collapse of the overall process, so it is difficult to determine its impact.

Indirect mechanisms have been developed by the UN. This includes the Women's Advisory Board in the Syria (Geneva) process and the Women's Pact and the Technical Advisory Group in the Yemen process. These mechanisms have been considerably contested but could evolve further in the future. The UN-led advisory boards have been criticised for being opaque and lacking transparency

## Women form their own delegations in Somalia and Northern Ireland

During the 2000 Somali National Peace Conference, the five main clans were dominated by men. Women mobilised across clans and formed the 'Sixth Clan', securing their presence as a delegation and ultimately signatories to the agreement. The Sixth Clan maintained their efforts at subsequent negotiations over the years and were decisive in establishing a parliamentary gender quota, getting agreement on a Ministry for Gender and Family Affairs, and many other achievements.[31] Another example of women seizing the moment and forming delegations is the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition formed in 1996 – a cross-party initiative that ensured women were represented in the peace talks.[32]

about selection criteria and who the women involved 'represent' – themselves or specific constituencies? It is worth noting, however, that this could equally be asked of male-dominated conflict parties, yet the question is rarely put to them in the same way. These mechanisms have also been criticised for being a substitute for direct participation, although the UN has consistently stated they are not.

Broader civil society inclusion forums such as the Syrian Civil Society Support Room, Civil Society Forum in Myanmar, and official consultations such as the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum also represent processes where efforts to integrate gender inclusion measures have occurred.[33] Another decisive route to participation for women is to form their own delegations.

***Develop rapid participation funds:*** Funding is needed to enable women's full and meaningful participation. It is common for women to be invited at the last moment to events due to the practice of 'add women and stir'. Inflexible budget lines can restrict women's ability to take advantage of unexpected opportunities. More flexible funds could also be used to 'plug' organisational and strategic gaps left by the potentially prolonged absence of key staff members who are involved in peace talks to avoid leaving strategic decision-making gaps within the organisation. An agile funding mechanism is invaluable for supporting women's participation in decision-making meetings or learning opportunities, providing a way to fund overlooked or unexpected opportunities. Such mechanisms need to have the ability to support unregistered organisations, which are common in conflict-affected countries. Practitioners also need to make explicit provision for covering caregiving responsibilities as part of recognising that this impedes many women in situations where responsibility for child-rearing and care isn't equally shared between women and men. Practitioners can also provide logistical support for difficulties such as negotiating visas with foreign governments and helping women to undertake the complicated, dangerous journeys needed to leave hostile situations to attend peace talks. Rapid participation funds work

## Women's rapid participation funds

USAID supported a Myanmar fund (managed by DAI Inc.) and made this widely available to women involved in peace efforts. They assisted with buying plane tickets, booking hotels and other logistical support, often within an hour. Access was further promoted with requests accepted in various languages. Help was also offered with translation of materials and interpretation during meetings (taking away a common inclusion barrier – language accessibility). This initiative was recognised by the UN Secretary-General as international good practice in 2018.[34]

best at the country level where they can reflect the context and needs and they may be faster to access due to fewer decision-making layers. The use of such funds can also be extended to enabling the participation of young people and others who are systematically excluded.

*Peacemaking is highly relational work and challenging to shift entirely online.*

***"Can you hear me?" – Foster inclusive online spaces:*** The COVID-19 pandemic has spurred the rapid adoption of online convening in the peace and security sector. Some find the online shift more conducive to participation, for example for women with children who can join meetings in the evenings after children are asleep. There are, however, downsides too: not everyone has access to a (good) internet connection; participants can appear engaged yet distracted with multi-tasking; time zone juggling means some participants are consistently sleep deprived. Women may also face difficulties with finding conducive workspaces at home, or having their paid employment demands recognised by family members while they work from home.

Peacemaking is highly relational work and challenging to shift entirely online, particularly given the trust deficits that run in all directions.[35] It is important to think about how to enable women's participation in online calls with little personal connection, possible

language barriers and other access issues. Ironically, it is now easier to be included but arguably it is harder to participate.

It is difficult to strike up connections online, especially with reticent conflict parties or with civil society representatives who may be concerned about surveillance and online safety. This creates additional strains for women involved in peace promotion, as connections to negotiating parties or decision-makers, already limited before the pandemic, have become even more limited, which has an impact on their ability to translate their influence and advocate effectively online.

When designing online processes, practitioners need to consider the different dynamics and how to enable women to engage in discussions with confidence. The 'Ask Women First' technique is central to online spaces too. Similarly, practitioners need to be aware that often shorter, online meetings could lead to women's rights and gender issues falling off agendas (a new version of the 'now is not the time' response often used to delay the discussion of gender concerns). Globally, women may also have less access to technology, such as smartphones, due to household hierarchies. It may, therefore, be worth considering supplying smartphones to foster the participation of women. Practitioners could also develop codes of conduct for online meetings and the framing of discussions to ensure they are inclusive.

***Provide digital safety for participants:*** Practitioners can ensure their organisations and agreements with donors build digital safety costs into budgets. This can cover secure VPNs, password protected software, data package support and promotion of encrypted and safer apps, as well as training in techniques to manage cyber surveillance and risks. These are costs that may seem out of reach for many participants, particularly civil society actors, but can be easily put in place by mediation organisations and other international actors who are already very focused on their own cybersecurity and need to address the risks for those in conflict-affected contexts too.

### Action 4: Undertake equitable engagements with women and women's organisations

Increasingly, peace organisations are looking to 'work with women's organisations' either in formal or informal partnerships, or through consultations. This can mean seeking out and starting long-term collaborations, or it might entail developing contacts and connections as an entry point into the context. Mediation practitioners need to be careful not to instrumentalise women's rights organisations to fulfil donor demands on WPS and 'do something' on gender inclusion or use them as logisticians for events. There are several ways to improve practice in this area:

***Clarity on engagement with women's rights and women-led organisations:*** Practitioners need to be clear about why they are engaging with 'women's groups' and which groups and movements they consequently need to engage. Consider taking a mixed approach, with a focus on equity (because women are half the population) which involves engaging with women-led groups across a range of sectors and issues, not just women's rights and gender equality; and also a focus on equality (because women are marginalised and oppressed by patriarchal values, practices and systems) which entails engaging with feminist movements and organisations.

***Organising meaningful consultations with women:*** If not respectfully designed, consultations can be one-way, extractive ad hoc events as opposed to mutually beneficial engagements with women in conflict-affected contexts. It is unhelpful to 'collect women's voices' since this can raise unrealistic expectations of commonality among women, including the need to 'speak with one voice' and find agreement over a range of issues. Convening online allows synchronous and asynchronous consultations, giving participants more time to reflect on concerns and questions offline, and over a period of time. Providing feedback on the consultations, in the form of a summary at a minimum, is important. Additionally, letting participants know where the ideas and suggestions will go is an obligation. If consultations are poorly designed and consistently

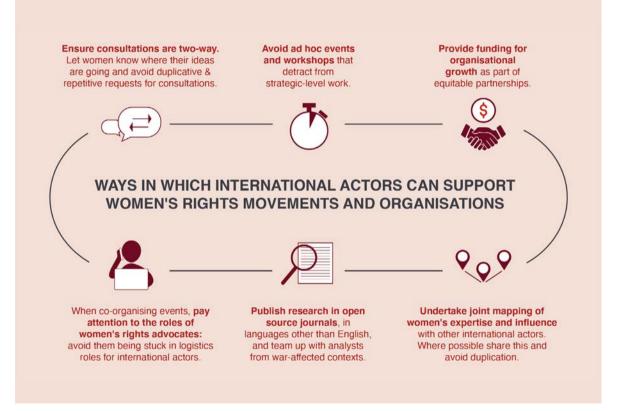seen as extractive, trust is eroded between women's organisations and international actors.[36]

***Establishing an equitable and effective approach to funding:***
Establishing more equitable relationships with women's rights organisations requires practitioners to examine privilege, position and power imbalances and reflect these in different types of support. Annual updates from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – Development Assistance Committee note that, although funding for gender equality has improved, it represents 5% of all bilateral aid (2018–2019).[37] However, little of this funding goes directly to women's rights organisations in focus countries – only 1% in 2016–2017.[38] An influential report described the results of this as 'watering the leaves, starving the roots'.[39] This is not just an area of responsibility for donors; practitioners in organisations involved in mediation support which are engaged in developing 'partnerships' and the business of sub-granting as secondary donors can make changes to improve funding flows to women's rights organisations. Supportive actions could include providing funding to cover core costs, which many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations struggle to secure. This inhibits their organisational development and strategic engagement on policy issues. Practitioners can also ensure support is extended to include funding to strengthen internal systems (to enable the organisation to successfully meet donor requirements), equipment purchases, as well as knowledge or skill-building opportunities (see Figure 4).

Providing women's rights groups with funding for organisational development is the smart thing to do, given the evidence of women's roles in non-violent movements. Feminist movements have been at the forefront of many political uprisings, from Tunisia to Sudan, Syria, Liberia, Lebanon and beyond.[40] The Colombian peace process provides inspiration and one of the most authoritative successes to date, both in terms of women's inclusion in peacemaking and outcomes that will advance gender equality. A central tenet was (and is) that the strong roles of women of all ages in the peace process

# Figure 4: Equitable collaborations with women's rights organisations



Ensure consultations are two-way. Let women know where their ideas are going and avoid duplicative & repetitive requests for consultations.

Avoid ad hoc events and workshops that detract from strategic-level work.

Provide funding for organisational growth as part of equitable partnerships.

**WAYS IN WHICH INTERNATIONAL ACTORS CAN SUPPORT WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENTS AND ORGANISATIONS**

When co-organising events, pay attention to the roles of women's rights advocates: avoid them being stuck in logistics roles for international actors.

Publish research in open source journals, in languages other than English, and team up with analysts from war-affected contexts.

Undertake joint mapping of women's expertise and influence with other international actors. Where possible share this and avoid duplication.

were underpinned by dynamic, well-organised and relatively well-resourced feminist movements, linked in strategic alliances with other non-violent change movements.

***Take care in creating and supporting women's networks:*** A detrimental development is excessive network creation by international actors involved in the WPS and YPS agendas. Practitioners may be tempted to create new women's networks, sometimes as an initial activity to become established in a country. However, with network proliferation comes increased competition for limited funding and the reinforcement, rather than transformation, of a host of complex power dynamics between and within women's organisations. It can also lead to exasperation from conflict parties and mediation teams about the volume of networks, as well as authenticity and legitimacy challenges. Common concerns with network creation include fostering conflict dynamics and forms of exclusion by paying too little attention to diversity and representation. Too many networks are created with short-term funding and struggle to thrive, compounding negative perceptions of women's groups as not strategic and competitive. Practitioners should consequently

## 'Slow' network development

In 2014, following genuine demand from civil society entities in Myanmar, international support was made available to accompany a set of NGOs and existing women's rights networks to design an alliance of organisations focusing on women's participation and gender inclusion in the peace process. A one-year development period was enabled by the (then) Peace Support Fund (PSF) before the network was launched publicly with a series of independently facilitated discussions and working groups. This created space to navigate some of the concerns from existing women's rights groups and gender equality networks. This co-design process helped to reduce some of these concerns and the Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process was born (www.agipp.org). Core and activity-based funding was also provided by PSF for the first two years. Among other achievements, AGIPP has gone on to propose gender perspectives on the formal political dialogue themes and issued the world's first feminist critique of a ceasefire.

proceed with caution, only setting up new networks after a rigorous Do No Harm assessment analysing the risks and added value, and following consultations with a wide range of civil society groups including women's rights groups.

## Action 5: Secure gender-inclusive provisions in peace agreements

In recent years, increasing attention has been directed to the quality of peace agreements, and the ways in which gender perspectives are integrated.[41] The content of agreements is remarkably varied but rigorous analysis has shown that clear and operational provisions related to women, women's rights, gender perspectives and gender equality are the exception, not the norm. Research efforts have narrowed the data gap and conclude:[42]

- Close to half of all peace agreements have been finalised with no references to gender or women, and where there are gender provisions they are weak in nature.[43]
- There are more than twice as many peace agreements (43%) with no gender provisions as there are with strong gender provisions (16%).[44]
- Gender provisions are overwhelmingly more likely to be present in major agreements, especially constitutions as well as final/comprehensive agreements, and least likely to be present in ceasefires and implementation agreements.[45]
- Provisions related to women tend to be singular or one-off references that are typically superficial, perhaps acknowledging a problem (e.g. sexual violence) but without actionable commitments or further references consistently carried through the rest of the agreement(s).
- Delays in implementing gender provisions are a discernible pattern, and they are implemented in less than half of cases.[46]

Peace agreements are associated with subtle political compromises and language formulations that often make most sense to those directly involved at that moment in time. This may be considered constructive ambiguity. However, this important mediation

technique can have deleterious consequences for women's rights and participation in public life. For example, deferral to the status quo is likely to occur if the provision is not clear or actionable. Seeking astute gender advice is paramount in order to strengthen agreement text and include 'hooks' for gender equality that can be expanded later.[47]

**Choose words with care:** Gender-inclusive language in agreements is much more than adding 'women, men, boys and girls' across documents or repeated references to Security Council Resolution 1325. Given that the base-line for good quality gendered provisions is low, practitioners need to be careful when drawing on text from another context. Pre-existing text can provide a precedent and should be used as a starting point, not an end point. There are open access databases that enable comparison of agreement text (see Annex 2 for a list of databases and apps on gender provisions in peace agreements). There are three types of text to be aware of:[48]

> *Gender-inclusive language in agreements is much more than adding 'women, men, boys and girls' across documents or repeated references to Security Council Resolution 1325.*

- *Blueprint text* generally provides generic references to WPS Security Council Resolutions and international standards and law.

  Example: 'Bearing in mind Security Council Resolution 1325 . . .'

  This provides symbolic and declaratory referencing of norma-tive standards that can be important for women to use in the future to argue for their inclusion. However, such text needs to be backed up by provisions in the rest of the agreement.

- *Statements of intent* might be classified as gender-sensitive but they are open to interpretation and can result in a default to the status quo (these provisions may include qualifiers such as "give due consideration," "adequate" and "appropriate").

Example: 'The political dialogue will include an appropriate number of women.'

This is not operational because it is not clear what an 'appropriate number' means. The status quo is therefore likely to prevail unless there is a decisive intervention or a leadership signal to ensure women are included. An alternative might be to state that women will include *at least* 30% of all participants.

• *Specific commitments* which provide a clear policy direction and can be operationalised and measured (making them gender-responsive).

Example: 'Development efforts by the central government recognise inequalities at regional and national level and will include, but not be limited to, consultations to allocate a minimum 20% across budgeting targeted at women's inclusion and gender equality.'

This can be operationalised and its implementation clearly monitored as it specifies who will undertake the action, at what levels, for what purpose and frames the budgetary allocation as a minimum so that it can be expanded over time. It also establishes a context for involving civil society.

**Support feminist critique of agreement text:** Practitioners can encourage and assist women's rights organisations and pro-peace networks to generate critiques of draft agreements (including ceasefires, preliminary agreements, and comprehensive frameworks) as well as those that have been finalised along with implementation mechanisms. Practitioners can also assist women's rights organisations and networks (such as women lawyers) to develop annual monitoring of agreements and their related implementation. These efforts can help to identify effective agreement text, as well as the mechanisms which produced it, to improve future practice.

# Feminist critique of the 2015 Myanmar ceasefire agreement

The world's first published feminist critique of a ceasefire comes from the Myanmar Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP), which assessed the 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (despite the name, this is a hybrid agreement and includes a framework for political dialogue and is also not 'national' in scope).[49] Some directly involved in the process were taken by surprise that AGIPP had done this and that so many women were involved (due to the large number of organisations AGIPP represents). This had value in and of itself, as male conflict party representatives at the centre of the ceasefire implementation process were not used to having women's opinions put forward. The critique gave the issue of sexual violence and its perpetration by armed actors significant attention, something which had been neglected in the male-dominated ceasefire talks.[50]

*Undertake a gender inclusion review during negotiations:* Undertaking rapid gender inclusion reviews during negotiations is a high impact way to adjust and improve the gendered language in agreement text and inclusive process design. Such reviews can be done formally or informally, and undertaken either by experienced advisers and experts or carried out through mechanisms such as a gender working group or sub-commission.

# Gender inclusion in action: Colombia

The peace process between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Erjecito del Pueblo (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army or FARC-EP) is often referred to as gender-inclusive. This is because of the combination of gender-specific agreement provisions and a gender-responsive approach to implementation (such as women's involvement in the ceasefire mechanism – providing oversight on the concerns of female ex-combatants). The Gender Sub-Commission is one among several standout innovations.[51]

The formal negotiations began in 2012. Following robust advocacy from women's organisations and recommendations from international experts to formalise women's

participation and gender inclusion in the process, the Gender Sub-Commission was developed in 2014. A central ingredient underpinning the efficacy of the Sub-Commission was a robust feminist movement and active civil society, and co-ordination between them, the parties, and the Sub-Commission.

A pivotal process which provided strategic 'signposts' for the gendered content was the Cumbre de Mujeres Y Paz (Women and Peace Summit), a series of events that gathered 1,200 women from different organisations and parts of the country between 2013 and 2016. This included nine regional gatherings organised by women's rights organisations in partnership with Congressional Peace Commissioners.[52] Following this iterative consultation process, recommendations were generated for the parties. Approximately a year after the last large summit, the Gender Sub-Commission was formed.

The Sub-Commission was composed mostly of women, and some men, from the conflict parties, plus two international experts. Their principal task was to review all the partial agreements and documents to ensure the inclusion of gender-sensitive and gender-responsive provisions. Colombian gender experts also provided inputs on request. The external facilitators played a role in transferring recommendations for gendered content to the 'table'. The resulting agreement signed in September 2016 has at least 100 gendered provisions. Most (27%) relate to rural reform measures; 17% are linked to political participation; 18% focus on addressing illicit drugs; 16% are about measures to end the conflict; 13% are related to clauses about victims and survivors; and 8% relate to implementation, monitoring and verification.[53]

While there may be a view that the Gender Sub-Commission had the unintended consequence of diverting responsibility for gender inclusion away from the talks and 'gender washing' parts of the text that had already been agreed, it still represents a remarkable standard.

In late 2019, the government indicated it was making progress on the 51 gender-specific indicators agreed in a Framework Implementation Plan. However, implementation of the gendered provisions has been uneven.

The Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, in collaboration with gender inclusion monitoring entities, registered concern that just 8% of provisions on gender have been implemented, with 42% not addressed at all (compared to 25% of provisions implemented and 27% not addressed in the whole agreement).[54] This disparity is only partly explained by the fact that many of the gender-related provisions are associated with long-term reforms around land use, the illicit drug trade, and political participation.

Some of the lag relates to gender power dynamics and the lower status accorded to progressing many of these provisions. A 2020 study from the Kroc Institute again highlighted the challenges of ensuring gender inclusion across the many plans and programmes to implement multiple provisions and macro-policy objectives.[55]

Critically, implementation of the agreement has also been marred by escalating violence, including targeting of women's human rights defenders, female combatants and parliamentarians.[56] This represents a profound impediment to both trust and the full participation of women.

### Action 6: Model good practice on inclusion within mediation organisations

The days of Big Man mediation are on the wane. Mediation organisations need competent, agile, emotionally intelligent staff who can listen empathetically, read the room and its silences, compromise, build alternate forms of rapport, and create different spaces to discuss difficult topics. These are skills and qualities many women

*The days of Big Man mediation are on the wane.*

and girls are socialised to express from birth due to patriarchal norms. Recognition that these qualities are central to effective mediation, and that they can be valued and applied by men and women alike, is slowly increasing.

Overtures to governments and armed groups are undermined if the mediation organisations are unrepresentative and demonstrate weak levels of diversity. Mediation actors need to 'do as they say', by facilitating the appointment of more female mediators, senior advisers, topic specialists and other front-facing roles with conflict parties. Gender parity in peace and security institutions has become a higher priority in recent years, accelerated by the UN Secretary-General's efforts to address male domination of leadership and senior positions.[57]

Pipelines into mediation are largely predicated on experience as a politician or government official. The fact that most of the world's foreign and defence ministers and ambassadors are male creates

a 'logical' stream into mediation, regardless of competency.[58] This is slowly changing with developments such as dedicated networks of women mediators and more attention to 'insider mediators': people of all ages, backgrounds and genders in conflict-affected countries who come from the societies they work in and have pre-established relationships of trust. There has been an explosion of interest and growth in mediation support and private diplomacy over the past 20 years with many positive outcomes, including the establishment of mediation support units within multilateral organisations and international NGOs and a sharper focus on effective peace support. Multiple actors can lead to overlap, duplication, competition, and co-ordination problems.[59] This also affects the quality and quantity of gender inclusion and WPS efforts.

Having more women in mediation does not, however, 'solve' the challenge of considering gender perspectives. Not all women are feminists and bring this stance to their work. Indeed, many women in the peace and security sector are conditioned *not* to be interested in women's rights and gender equality if they want to be taken seriously. It is therefore incumbent on everyone in a mediation team to apply a gender lens. More capable and accountable gender advisers would contribute to improvements too, through catalysing colleagues to take evidence-informed action and providing astute political guidance.

Seven suggestions for catalysing effective and inclusive organisations are provided here:

1. ***Gauge perceptions of inclusion across the organisation:*** Survey staff and consultants on perceptions of exclusion/inclusion, racism, sexism, homophobia, religious intolerance, and experience of the unexamined privilege of others. This will enable the establishment of a baseline for setting objectives to challenge internal and cultural norms.

2. ***Revise job descriptions and performance reviews:*** Consider whether the mediation organisation has a hypermasculine 'star

culture', rewarding men who take 'risks' and are able to travel at short notice. COVID-19 travel restrictions have disproven the logic that travel signifies impact, competency and hard work. Revise job descriptions and performance reviews to seek out, acknowledge and reward relevant qualities such as demonstrable active listening skills, inclusive project or process management, and examples of sharing space or ceding opportunities to enable women to assume more visible roles. Ensure those recruiting and conducting reviews are aware that social and cultural conditioning (including gender, class and education) inhibit some people, particularly women, from promoting their strengths. Offer coaching, where necessary, to help staff define and articulate their strengths, weaknesses and goals.

3. *Expand referral pools and reframe recruitment principles:* In the mediation sector, roles continue to be filled in opaque ways, often to keep specific areas of work confidential or due to the unusual skills required, or simply because of the entrenched male networks at play. However, organisations and practitioners can take action to move beyond male-dominated networks and referral pools. Organisations can commit to an annual call for women with country-specific experience and thematic expertise. Such a process could offer women the opportunity to demonstrate their expertise as consultants and be considered for longer-term roles. When vacancies arise, an affirmative action principle for practitioners to consider in recruitment is to replace a woman with a woman. Organisations could also consider a strategy of only hiring women for a set period to expedite gender parity.

4. *Ensure carers are not disadvantaged:* Make sure managers, human resource teams and leaders are aware of the subtle disadvantages women may face due to maternity leave and child-rearing. Women who are also mothers in this sector can quickly become stuck in enabling roles in the office while men undertake the high-profile work. Flexible working hours and job-sharing are two feasible options which may be attractive to women and men with younger children or other caring responsibilities. There

are successful examples of job-sharing in the private sector and in diplomatic missions (the German and Swiss foreign ministries, for example, have job-share arrangements).

5. ***Enforce zero-tolerance of sexism and sexual harassment:*** Ensure policies reflect the fact that harassment and sexism can take many forms including subtle misuses of power and opportunistic predation. Make clear that sexist, homophobic or racist banter that is projected as light-hearted ('just a bit of fun') is not acceptable. The #MeToo and #TimesUp movements revealed the prevalence of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse across a host of industries; this is yet to fully unfold in the peace and security sector.[60] Establish accessible and credible channels for reporting complaints. A system combining both formal and informal elements can help to build trust. For example, the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) established a complaints system including Internal Persons of Trust (one male, one female) to provide a first point of contact for all sexual harassment concerns, in addition to a set of external support options.

6. ***Review interview processes:*** Mediation organisations first need to commit to ensuring transparent recruitment processes to ensure all competent people have access to job opportunities. Interviews are an integral part of accountable recruitment yet can be another process where historical disadvantage undermines women. Commit to achieving gender parity in interview panels and in the number of people interviewed for any position, wherever possible. Include specific questions about diversity, bias and approaches to inclusion. Asking about transferable experiences and skills is one way to draw out the strengths of those without specific mediation or peacemaking experience.

7. ***Cut out mansplaining, bropriating and manterruption:***[61] Notice and counteract male domination of discussions to create space for women to be heard. Ask women for their views first so they have more chance of being heard and continuing to participate.

# 4 | Conclusion

Gender inclusive mediation demands an innovative mindset and people who can credibly combine evidence and gender equality principles in the hostile spaces that define peacemaking. Negotiating parties are rightly bemused when asked to include women in their delegations by mediation teams who are, themselves, all-male. Progressive states routinely fail to propose women for high profile mediation roles. Unless there is a new approach to competency-based mediation, men will continue to dominate the space.

However, there is not much point pushing for more women if the 'operating environment' remains unchanged. A new generation of women working in peace and security is far less willing to tolerate sexism, sexual harassment and other forms of oppression, and stay silent. As women have not yet reached a critical mass in the peace and security sector, parity initiatives remain essential. Building more effective connections and relationships of trust with pro-peace women's organisations and feminist movements is also vital. Sustained support to women's rights organisations and movements can play a critical part in transforming violent conflict.

By consistently applying the ideas presented in this paper, mediation actors and those who fund them would contribute positively to the quality of peace processes, agreements and their implementation, and the credibility and professionalism of the mediation sector itself.

# Annex 1: An overview of methods

Many individuals generously gave their time, perspectives and ideas to inform this publication. It was also peer reviewed by nine up-and-coming and more established practitioners.

*Note: Titles and positions may have subsequently changed.*

**Group discussion participants – June 2020**

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7. Asif Khan, Chief of Mediation Support and Gender, Peace and Security, Policy and Mediation Division, UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
8. Ayak Chol Deng Alak, Head of Research at the South Sudan Strategic Defence and Security Review Board and Co-Founder of Anataban
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29. Maria Victoria (Mavic) Cabrera Balleza, Chief Executive Officer,
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30. Martine Miller, Vice President, International Center for Religion
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31. Nahla Vahlji, Senior Gender Adviser, UN Executive Office of the
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38. Sarah Douglas, Deputy Chief for Peace and Security, UN Women
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**Individual interviews conducted from June–August 2020 and January–March 2021**

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3. Nussaibah Younis, Prospect Peace
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# Annex 2: Databases and apps on gender provisions in agreements

This list only includes peace agreement databases which have 'gender', 'women' or 'women's rights' as distinct search categories.

**PA-X Peace Agreements Database:** University of Edinburgh, Political Settlements Research Programme. Available at www.peaceagreements.org. Includes peace agreements from 1990 to 2021, with gender-specific content in agreements coded and searchable. Also includes a sub-set database focusing explicitly on gender: **PA-X Gender** (also at www.peaceagreements.org). Site in English.

**Peace Maker Peace Agreement Database:** UN Department of Political Affairs. Available at https://peacemaker.un.org/. Agreements can be searched for by gender provisions. Site in English.

**Escola de Cultura de Pau:** Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona. Available at http://escolapau.uab.cat. Approximately 40 conflicts included along with a summary of gender dynamics for each conflict. Site in Spanish, Catalan and English.

**Mapping Gender Provisions of Peace Agreements:** Monash University Gender, Peace and Security Centre. Available at https://bit.ly/2vRnJIR and http://mappingpeace.monashgps.org. 110 agreements with five search categories. Includes 21 situational analyses. Site in English.

**PeaceFem app:** Developed by UN Women, InclusivePeace, the Monash University Gender, Peace and Security Centre and the Political Settlements Research Programme at the University of Edinburgh. Available at https://www.politicalsettlements.org/peacefem/. Combines a range of data into an app in English and Arabic.

# Endnotes

1   Klugman, J., Nagel, R. & Viollaz, M. (2021). *Women's empowerment as a path to peace: Understanding the relationship between gender equality and organised violence*. Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. Washington D.C.: GIWPS.

2   Buchanan, C. (Ed.). (2020). *Pioneering peace pathways – making connections to end violent conflict.* Accord 29. London: Conciliation Resources; Dudouet, V. & Schädel, A. (2021). *New evidence: To build peace, include women from the start.* United States Institute for Peace Blog, 11 March, which reflects on findings from Schädel, A. & Dudouet, V. (2020). *Incremental inclusivity: A recipe for effective peace processes?* Research Report. Berlin: Berghof Foundation.

3   Blockages and delay in implementing the WPS agenda were detailed in Coomaraswamy, R. (2015). *Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing the peace: a global study on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325,* New York: UN Women. See also O'Reilly, M., et al. (2015). *Reimagining peacemaking: women's roles in peace processes*. New York: International Peace Institute.

4   See, Freeman, R. (Ed.) (2019). *Restricted spaces: Case studies and ways forward.* Philadelphia: American Friends Service Committee; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Women's human rights and gender-related concerns in situations of conflict and stability*. Available at https://www.ohchr.org/en/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/PeaceAndSecurity.aspx; Pruth, C. and Viklund, A. (2017). *Building resilience - counteracting the shrinking space for women's rights*. Stockholm: Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, available at https://kvinnatillkvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/2-Building-resilience-counteracting-the-shrinking-space.pdf; Kvinna till Kvinna. (2018). *Suffocating the movement – shrinking space for women's rights*. Stockholm: Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, available at https://kvinnatillkvinna.se/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/kvinna-till-kvinna-suffocating-the-movement-report-eng-2018.pdf. See also, CIVICUS annual State of Civil Society reports, available at https://www.civicus.org/index.php/state-of-civil-society-report-2019.

5   For example: Ebner, J. (2020). *Going dark: The secret social lives of extremists*. UK: Bloomsbury Publishing; Oppenheim, M. (2019, May 11). The rise of the far right is costing women their dignity and human rights around the world – Here's how. *The Independent*. For an overview of debates on populism see Baker, P. C. (2019, January 10). We the people, the battle to define populism. *The Guardian*.

6   Kratzer, S. (2019). Better together: trends in dialogue and mediation. *Dialogue in peacebuilding – understanding different perspectives*. *Development Dialogue,* Volume 64 (Dec); Whitfield, T. (2019). *Mediating in a complex world.* Oslo Forum Background Paper. Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.

7   See, for example, World Bank and United Nations. (2017). *Pathways for peace: Inclusive approaches to preventing violent conflict,* Washington D.C.: World Bank; Krause, J., Krause, W. & Bränfors, P. (2018). Women's participation in peace negotiations and the durability of peace, *International Interactions, 44*:6,

pp.985-1016; Domingo, P., Holmes, R., Menocal, A. R., & Jones, N. (2013), *Assessment of the evidence of links between gender equality, peacebuilding and statebuilding: Literature review.* London: Overseas Development Institute.

8   This graphic provides examples from discussions that informed this paper. Direct unattributed quotes are, however, associated with fictitious names. The scenarios in the box at the bottom right are fictitious, though they illustrate some of the additional difficulties associated with the shift to online meetings in 2020.

9   For critical analysis of gender mainstreaming see various chapters in: Caglar, G., Prügl E. & Zwingel, S. (Eds.) (2012). *Feminist strategies in international governance*. New York: Routledge; True, J. & Parisi, L. (2013). *Gender mainstreaming in global governance*; True, J. (2003). Mainstreaming gender in global public policy. *International Feminist Journal of Politics. 5*(3), pp.368-396.

10  See, Perlman, M. (2018, October 23). A short history of the term 'intersectionality. *Colombia Review of Journalism*.

11  Celis, K., et al. (2008). Rethinking women's substantive representation. *Representation*, *Vol. 44*, No. 2, pp.99-110; Childs, S. & Lovenduski, J. (2012). Political representation. In G. Waylen et al, (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics* (pp.489-513). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

12  O'Rourke, C. (2014). 'Walk[ing] the halls of power'? Understanding women's participation in international peace and security. *Transnational Justice Institute research paper No.14-11*; Ellerby, K. (2016). A seat at the table is not enough: Understanding women's substantive representation in peace processes. *Peacebuilding*, *4*(2), pp.136-50. Close, S. (2018). *Gendered political settlements: Examining peace transitions in Bougainville, Nepal and Colombia.* London: Conciliation Resources; Dayal, A. (2018). *Connecting informal and formal peace talks: From movements to mediators*. Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. Policy Brief. Washington D.C.: GIWPS.

13  See references in this paper along with the Further Reading list at the end of the publication.

14  To support refinement of the concept, the UN Secretary-General dedicated one part of the 2018 annual UN WPS report to the topic. An Experts Group Meeting was convened by UN Women to inform this process (https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security). See: UN Women. (2018). *Experts Group report on women's meaningful participation in peace processes and gender-inclusive peace agreements*. New York: UNW. Graphic further developed by Cate Buchanan in 2021.

15  For a fascinating account of feminist contributions to peace research (as well as efforts to discount them), see Lyytikainen, M., Punam Y., Annick, T. R.W., Marjaana, J. & Confortini, C. (2020). Unruly wives in the household: Toward feminist genealogies for peace research. *Cooperation and Conflict*, pp.1-23, available at https://doi.org.10.1177/0010836720938397. The 2018 UN Secretary-General report on WPS (S/2018/900) noted variable performance across the UN system and stated: "All entities in the United Nations system with reporting requirements on women and peace and security will be expected to develop gender-sensitive conflict analysis guidelines and mechanisms by 2020" (para 115).

16  Nagel, R. U. (2019). The known knowns and known unknowns in data on women peace and security. *LSE Centre for Women, Peace and Security, Paper 19*, p.16.

17  For guidance see Close, S. & Wright, H. (2019). *Inclusion in practice: Examining gender-sensitive conflict analysis.* Practice Paper. London: Conciliation Resources;

Close, S., Groenewald, H. & Trimiño Mora, D. (2020). *Facilitation guide: Gender-sensitive conflict analysis.* London: Conciliation Resources and Saferworld; Haines, R. & O'Neil, T. (2018). *Putting gender in political economy analysis: Why it matters and how to do it.* Briefing note, Gender and Development Network; UN Women. (2012). *Policy Briefing Paper Gender and Conflict Analysis*, New York: UNW; Conciliation Resources. (2015). *Gender and conflict analysis toolkit.* London: Conciliation Resources (also in French); Browne, E. (2014). *Gender in political economy analysis*, GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 1071, Birmingham, UK: GSDRC; Harris, C. (2011). *What can applying a gender lens contribute to conflict studies? A review of selected MICROCON working papers,* MICROCON Research Working Paper 41, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton: MICROCON; Farr, V. (2003). Gender awareness in research and policy making. *African Security Review*, *Vol. 12*, Issue 1, pp.115-118.

18 Buchanan, C. & Williscroft, C. (2016). *The women are ready: An opportunity to transform peace in Myanmar.* Yangon: Peace Support Fund. The WILPF analysis on Cameroon is available at http://www.wilpf-cameroon.org/en/wilpf-gender-conflict-analysis-in-cameroon.

19 UN Peacebuilding Fund. (2019). *PBF Guidance Note on Gender Marker Scoring.* New York: UN. This provides good guidance on how to understand the different levels.

20 This tool was originally framed as the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale developed by Gender@Work for the UN Development Programme (2015). *Evaluation of UNDP's contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment*. New York: UNDP; see also, Rao, A., Sandler, J., Kelleher, D. & Miller, C. (2016). *Gender at work: theory and practice for 21st century organizations.* NYC: Routledge. Thank you to Gender@Work for inspiration.

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23 Anderson, M. J. & Swiss, L. (2014). Peace accords and the adoption of electoral quotas for women in the developing world, 1990–2006. *Politics and Gender. 10*(1), pp.33-61. See also Shair-Rosenfield, S., & Wood, R. (2017). Governing well after war: how improving female representation prolongs post-conflict peace. *Journal of Politics. 79*(3), pp.995-1009.

24 Some of the existing women's mediator networks include the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation known as FemWise-Africa (https://globalwomenmediators.org/femwise-africa); Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (https://www.c-r.org/programme/women-mediators-across-commonwealth); Nordic Women Mediators Network; Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (https://womenmediators.net); The Arab Women Mediators

Network (https://globalwomenmediators.org/arab-women-mediators-network); Southeast Asian Network of Women Peace Negotiators and Mediators (https://twitter.com/SEAWomenPeaceNM); and a Global Alliance on Regional Women Mediator Networks now also exists (https://globalwomenmediators.org).

25 Here are three examples of many: Foreign Policy Interrupted (https://interruptrr. com/expert-lists/); Brussels Binder (https://brusselsbinder.org); Women Mediators in the Commonwealth database (https://www.womenmediators.org). LinkedIn is, of course, also now a major resource for identifying female experts.

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27 Following the military coup on 1st February 2021, the formal Myanmar peace process has now been derailed and this example pertains to the pre-2021 period. For more background see Ja Nan Lahtaw. (2020). Unsticking stalled peace processes: Insider mediator perspectives from Myanmar. In Buchanan, C. (Ed.) *Pioneering peace pathways – making connections to end violent conflict.* Accord 29, London: Conciliation Resources.

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29 These mechanisms and more references are detailed here: Annex 3 in UN Women (2018). *Experts Group report on women's meaningful participation in peace processes and gender-inclusive peace agreements.*

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31 A driving force behind this initiative was Asha Hagi Elmi who won the Right Livelihood Award (the alternative Nobel Peace Prize) in 2008. An overview of her work is available at https://www.rightlivelihoodaward.org/laureates/asha-hagi-elmi. There is also a video of her speaking in 2009 about the Sixth Clan available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4Nku0HUedE&feature=youtu.be.

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34 UN. (2018, October 9). *Report of the Secretary-General on women peace and securit*y. S/2018/900, para.33.

35 Hirblinger, A. (2020). *Designing digital inclusion in peacemaking: Summary of findings.* Geneva: The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies.

36 A multilingual tool has been developed which outlines steps for designing and delivering respectful consultations with women: GAPS UK et al. (2019). *Beyond consultations: A tool for meaningfully engaging with women in fragile and conflict-*

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37 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee, GenderNet. (2021). *Development finance for gender equality and women's empowerment: A 2021 snapshot*. Paris: OECD-DAC.

38 See data from OECD-DAC. (2019). *Aid in support of gender equality and women's empowerment. March 2019. Statistics based on DAC Members' reporting on the Gender Equality Policy Marker, 2016-2017*. Paris: OECD-DAC. Also see 2014 data reported in: OECD-DAC. (2016). *Donor support to southern women's right organisations: OECD findings*. OECD-DAC Network on Gender Equality (GenderNet). Paris: OECD-DAC, p.4: *"Where resources are reaching women's rights organisations, they are typically small-scale and short-term. Small amounts of money can stimulate learning and innovation, but they do not enable vital expansion, scale-up and strengthening of organisational and operational capacity."*

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40 See, Principe, M. A. (2017, January). Women in nonviolent movements. *United States Institute of Peace Special Report*, No. 399; Schädel, A. & Dudouet, V. (2020). *Incremental inclusivity: A recipe for effective peace processes?*; Chenoweth, E. (2019). *Women's participation and the fate of nonviolent resistance campaigns: A report on the Women in Resistance (WIRE) dataset.* Broomfield, CO: One Earth Future Foundation; Chenoweth, E. & Stephan, M. (2011). *Why civil resistance works: The strategic logic of nonviolent action.* New York: Columbia University Press; Tamaru, N., Holt-Ivry, O. & O'Reilly, M. (2018). *Beyond revolution: How women influenced constitution making in Tunisia.* UNDP and Inclusive Security; Wimmen, H. & Assenburg, M. (2016) Dynamics of transformation, elite change and new social mobilization in the Arab world. *Mediterranean Politics*, 21, pp. 1-22.

41 Bell, C. (2013, March). *Women and peace processes, negotiations and agreements: Operational opportunities and challenges*, NOREF Briefing Paper. Oslo: Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre; Buchanan, C. & Potter Prentice, A. (Eds.). (2011). *Peacemaking in Asia Pacific: Women's participation, perspectives, priorities*, Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.

42 Monash University, Gender Peace and Security Centre reviewed 110 agreements, 2000-2016, and the Political Settlements Research Programme, University of Edinburgh, reviewed 267 agreements, 1990-2020. Also see the Council on Foreign Relations (https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes).

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49 Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. (2018). *If half the population mattered: A critique of the Myanmar Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement and Joint Monitoring Committee Framework from a gender perspective.* Policy brief 4. Yangon: AGIPP.

50  United Nations Human Rights Council. (2019, August 22). *Sexual and gender-based violence in Myanmar and the gendered impact of its ethnic conflicts.* A/HRC/42/CRP.4. Also see the annual reports of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the listing of the Myanmar Armed Forces in March 2018 as perpetrators of such violence (https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/digital-library/reports/sg-reports).

51 There are many other notable elements in the Colombian peace process on the theme of gender inclusion, see: Winstanley, L. (2018*). Special Report of the Kroc Institute and the International Accompaniment Component, UN Women, Women's International Democratic Federation, and Sweden, on the monitoring of the gender perspective in the implementation of the Colombian Final Peace Accord, December 2016 – June 2018.* Bogota: Kroc Institute; Cumbre Nacional de Mujeres y Paz. (2018). *Report on Results of the Final Agreement related to Women's Rights.* Bogota: Cumbre Nacional de Mujeres y Paz; Salvesen, H. & Nylander, D. (2017). *Towards an inclusive peace: Women and the gender approach in the Colombian peace process.* Oslo: NOREF; Bouvier, V. M. (2016). *Gender and the role of women in Colombia's peace process.* Washington D.C.: US Institute for Peace & UN Women.

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53 UN Women. (2018). *Experts Group report on women's meaningful participation in peace processes and gender-inclusive peace agreements*.

54 Barometer Initiative, Peace Accords Matrix, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, UN Women, FDIM, Sweden. (2019). *Gender equality for sustainable peace. Second report on the monitoring of the gender perspective in the implementation of the Colombian Peace Accord*. Report 2, University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA and Bogotá, Colombia.

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61 'Mansplaining' is when a man over-explains or re-explains a point to a woman; 'Bropriating' is when a man appropriates the ideas and work of a woman; 'Manterruption' is when a man constantly interrupts a woman or women, or talks over the top of them in a way he does not do with men.

# Further reading

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Buchanan, C., Potter Prentice A., et al. (2012). *From clause to effect: including women's rights and gender in peace agreements.* Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.

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UN Women. (2012). *Women's participation in peace negotiations: Connections between presence and influence*. New York: UN Women.

# About the author

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Cate has worked extensively in Myanmar as an adviser to the Nyein (Shalom) Foundation and the armed groups it works with, supporting national dialogues and negotiation approaches. She was also an adviser to the Myanmar Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. She previously worked for HD from 2001 to 2013 as the Armed Violence Reduction Programme Manager and subsequently as Senior Adviser across mediation initiatives in Asia. With Antonia Potter she established Athena Consortium, a feminist peace and security advisory service, in 2013.

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