

# *FBA Brief 2019*

## Supporting Inclusive Peace Processes



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*In the dynamic and fast changing world of conflict resolution, it is no longer viable to resolve major conflicts through elite deals. The inclusion and voices of the various constituencies from women, to youth, minorities, business communities and more, are now an essential ingredient in achieving sustainable peace. Diplomats, governments, rebel groups and mediators all need to adjust to this new reality of complex peace making. Challenges undoubtedly come with new reality, but research and communities of practice are working to fill the gaps in knowledge on how to best work with inclusive peace processes.*

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Conflict resolution practitioners have had to grapple with the changing and dynamic environment that they are working in over the last three decades. Before the ending of the Cold War many conflicts and wars were between two countries or more and the resolution was often reached through either victory or defeat, or an agreement between the states at the elite level. Each state then returned to their own people as heroes, and there was no need to reconcile with the people in their individual countries.

## Changes in Warfare

Today, the international armed conflict environment and the prospects for peaceful resolution has significantly changed. Most conflicts today are of an internal civil war nature, that spills over borders and draws in neighbouring countries and populations, who are not always controlled by any state. The causes of these conflicts often stem from serious divisions within society where certain groups have been marginalized and lack social, economic and political power, due to their identities. Thus, real structural challenges exist within these countries and will need to be addressed as part of the sustainable resolution to the conflict. These developments mean that any successful and lasting resolution of such a conflict ideally includes all those affected by the conflict - the conflict parties, women, victims, ethnic groups, civil society, business communities, religious leaders, grassroots and many other stakeholders. They are to reconcile their differences and build a future together in the same country where they must live side-by-side.

## Adapting Conflict Resolution

As a consequence, the resolution of most armed conflicts today should extend beyond a simple deal between the armed groups or elites within a country. Dealing with the deep-seated challenges within a society, peace processes today (from negotiations, through to the signing of a peace agreement and its implementation), need to be inclusive. The armed groups and their rank and file are also to be included in the peace process and must also share the peace dividends that come from it. Thus, any serious conflict resolution efforts to achieve sustainable peace, need to ensure that all groups in society have the opportunity to be heard and have their concerns addressed.

## Inclusive Peace

The Dialogue and Peace Mediation Unit (DPM), at the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), has been working to promote and advise international peace processes on

women's inclusion as well as the broader inclusion of affected and marginalized groups in peace processes in various conflict areas around the world.

*Peace negotiations are ultimately about the disbursement of power. Who will get to control what, and who will get what position when the conflict has ended. I appreciate the fact that to even get the conflicting parties to negotiate with each other is difficult, even without being inclusive. And if you get them to the table, the risk that negotiations break down is overwhelming. We need to be cognisant of the fact that inclusion is also often not in the interest of the conflict parties, so the pressure to include representatives of all facets of society, in one form or another, is often on third parties, on actors such as us. It can be in formal negotiations, but it can also take place in the form of consultations, working groups, testimonials etc. As fewer and fewer negotiations take place at an actual table (which I also think we should see as an opportunity rather than a challenge), the issue of sequencing becomes more and more important. We can no longer shy away from the fact that inclusion for all intents and purposes seem to be integral to sustainable peace. – Chris Coulter, Head of The Dialogue and Peace Mediation Unit, FBA*

The focus on meaningful participation demands that we do not simply work towards token forms of inclusion. Women and other groups cannot be part of the process for cosmetic reasons or to make up the numbers. They need to be included at all stages of a peace process and need to be included in the formal negotiations, as part of the negotiating teams and in leadership roles within the negotiating teams. For effectiveness and consistency, the mediation/facilitation teams also need to reflect these inclusive practices where women are represented as experts and mediators.

*Sweden has been a strong champion of inclusive peace processes and has had a specific focus on women's meaningful participation – the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The focus on supporting women's participation is being validated by increasing evidence that suggests that meaningful inclusion of women and other marginalized groups that allows them to have an influence on the peace process, increases the likelihood of reaching and implementing peace agreements. – Thania Paffenholz, Can Inclusive Peace Processes Work? Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative Policy Brief, Geneva, April 2015*

FBA, in close cooperation with the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, coordinates the Swedish Women's

Mediation Network. The network is made up of 15 senior women with extensive expertise and experience relevant to conflict mediation, peacebuilding and negotiations. They serve as the Swedish Foreign Minister's Special Representatives for Inclusive and Sustainable Peace Processes.

*Through practical engagement in terms of advice and capacity building activities with women's groups and conflict parties, the Swedish Women's Mediation Network works to ensure that women's perspectives, needs and priorities are included in peace processes. Members of the Network have been engaged in various processes around the world including Somalia, Afghanistan, Georgia and South Sudan, to name a few. – Anna Möller-Loswick, Dialogue and Peace Mediation Unit, FBA*

The dialogue and mediation programme for Somali women was initiated in 2017.

*It aims to support female civil society leaders in the use of dialogue and mediation as tools in current peace and state building initiatives. It is ultimately all about working jointly with the conditions for increased female participation in peacebuilding initiatives at different levels in Somalia. – Per Bjälkander, Dialogue and Peace Mediation Unit, FBA*

## **Challenges to Inclusion**

However, the promotion of inclusion in peace processes to end violent conflicts does not come without challenges. In many instances, the armed and governmental parties to a conflict do not see the value of having an inclusive process. This can come about for various reasons such as the fear of sharing power between an extended group of stakeholders. Or the conflict parties may view civil society and other marginalized groups as part of their constituencies and therefore already represented during negotiations.

*We have picked up arms to fight against the injustices that these very groups were facing. It is for them we are fighting. How can it now be said that we cannot speak on their behalf? How are they no longer part of our struggle? – Quote by one of the leaders of an armed group during negotiations*

Other reasons for exclusion can be history or culture which are important factors. In many countries and cultures, women have historically been excluded from the negotiating table and indeed many other social, political and economic spheres of life, and have in some cases not been regarded with equal status as men. Surprisingly though, even in cultures

where women have had equal status with men, male-dominated groups often do not want women participating as equal partners in peace processes. The inclusion of marginalized groups also demands that the peace practitioner and the parties go to extra lengths to ensure genuine inclusion. This hints at a fundamental challenge with inclusion, that it will require a certain level of organizational, societal and cultural adjustment and change. It will also require additional financing to run inclusive processes.

*Inclusive peacebuilding can sometimes be superficial and not really change much of the status quo. This is because you simply can't include any women or youth, check the box and think the work is done. You need to pose the critical question: Who needs to be included? And you need to be ready to invest efforts and resources into inclusivity. In Liberia, we turned our focus away from the few usual NGOs and the elite in Monrovia. This allowed our programme to target a set of young Liberian peace leaders representing each of the 15 counties and involve them in the programme. Some of them from the South East hadn't even visited the capital and never shared their perspectives with political leaders. – Maja Jakobsson, Dialogue and Peace Mediation Unit, FBA*

Conversely, a passionate argument often made is that the primary goal of a peace process is to end the violence and save lives now! Including stakeholders that do not have a key role in the armed conflict is not a priority nor realistic. Such arguments are difficult to dismiss lightly. There are genuine difficulties and serious risks to any peace process, and it is naïve to assume that a process can make initial headway if all actors are included from the start and all at the same table. The mediation process can be sequenced and divided into phases. The views and concerns of the various groups can be added to and included in the main negotiating format.

## **Inclusion Appreciated**

*FBA conducted capacity enhancement workshops in Afghanistan 2016-2018 for women from various provinces in Afghanistan. The objective of the programme was to contribute to and support a legitimate and sustainable Afghan peace process by strengthening skills and professional capacity of women to engage in conflict prevention and conflict resolution at the local, provincial and national level in Afghanistan. – Sofia Zitouni, Dialogue and Peace Mediation Unit, FBA*

The signing of a peace agreement does not end the peace process. Inclusion and addressing of structural

problems within a society must continue after the agreement is signed to make sure the core causes of the conflict are settled. The use of Good Offices is often needed to help develop the language on inclusion in the peace agreement into fully fledged societal programmes for implementation.

*In Iraq, FBA will focus on supporting young peace workers in their attempts to bridge secular and ethnic narratives. Trust building and effective communication will be front and centre of everything we do. This will also necessitate a longer-term engagement, which the Swedish strategy for development cooperation with Iraq allows.* – Tobias Petrelius, Dialogue and Peace Mediation Unit, FBA

Sometimes inclusive peace processes are not only appreciated by the professional conflict resolution practitioners, but also by the stakeholders to the conflict themselves. In the Colombia negotiations, the victims who gave testimony in Havana (2014), were grateful for the opportunity to speak directly to the conflict parties and let them know how devastating the armed violence had been for them and their families. The victims implored the government of Colombia and the FARC not to leave the table without a peace agreement. This was also evident in Liberia and Uganda:

*I appreciated that the Conflict Prevention Leadership Programme (CPLP) gathered people from all the counties and that we, as the participants, have been part of the process. You do not see that kind of inclusive process with our institutions. This has created a sense of togetherness, and over a period of time CPLP feels like a family.* – Quote from a Liberian youth participant in the programme

*It is very good that we, the youth and females, are allowed to come and have these discussions with the leaders. Usually, they just want to push us down and tell us we know nothing. But today we could let them hear our voices* – Quote from a woman and youth participant in a peace dialogue in Uganda

While it is undoubtedly clear that meaningful and broad-based inclusion are key aspects of successful and sustainable peace processes, gaps remain in the knowledge of how to most effectively run inclusive peace processes.

## Conclusion

The professionalization of the dialogue and mediation field over the last two decades has meant that there now exists a core body of expertise and a community of practitioners that have gained significant and chartered knowledge on how to work with these issues.

*“While this is no guarantee for success, it provides an expanding community of well-versed experts that are continuing to systematically develop this field, which should, in turn, help close some of the existing gaps in knowledge and know-how.”* – Stine Lehmann-Larsen, Director, Mediation, Policy & European Relations, European Institute of Peace

Another significant step to move forward is to increasingly inform and gain acceptance for inclusive peace processes more widely among conflict parties and stakeholders - including victims, the regional and international community. An understanding of the value of inclusion and its long-term effects on sustaining peace needs to be pronounced more often to create societal acceptance.

Lastly, peace processes are costly, and inclusive peace processes even more so as they consist of the participation of a much larger community that includes various segments of society. It also requires much larger efforts to run inclusive peace processes, which also cost more in terms of resources. Those paying the bill for a peace process must make a cost-benefit analysis of a failed peace process that reverts to armed conflict and the significantly higher costs that creates, against the increased but significantly lower costs of an inclusive peace process.



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