

# Women's Experiences in the South Sudan Peace Process 2013-2018

South Sudanese women's groups and representatives contributed significantly to the country's peace process, though this was rarely made visible in the media. Their roles included:



Official observers to the peace process



Delegates in the negotiations



Signatories to the peace agreement



Advocates at national and local level

## Strategies for influencing the formal negotiations

### Advocacy at all levels

Women's organisations engaged in public advocacy and more discreet quiet diplomacy to call for an inclusive peace process, a place at the negotiations and for specific reforms. Importantly, they targeted decision-makers at different levels including leaders of the conflict parties, regional authorities such as IGAD, and international partners.

### Extensive Preparations

At the negotiating table, extensive preparations were crucial. Helpful measures included conducting a power mapping of key decision-makers to target advocacy, seeking support from technical advisers to deepen understanding of draft provisions under discussion, and agreeing in advance on 'red lines' as shared positions in the negotiations.

### Alliances

Diverse women representatives came together to form issue-based coalitions and develop joint messages; including women from both government and opposition controlled areas, diaspora, faith-based organisations, grassroots associations, IDP and refugee communities and business groups.

### Community Outreach

Women leaders strove to ensure that citizens were updated on the peace process, particularly in rural areas. For instance, grassroots consultations and social media groups were used for information-sharing and channelling civic constituencies' concerns into the negotiations.

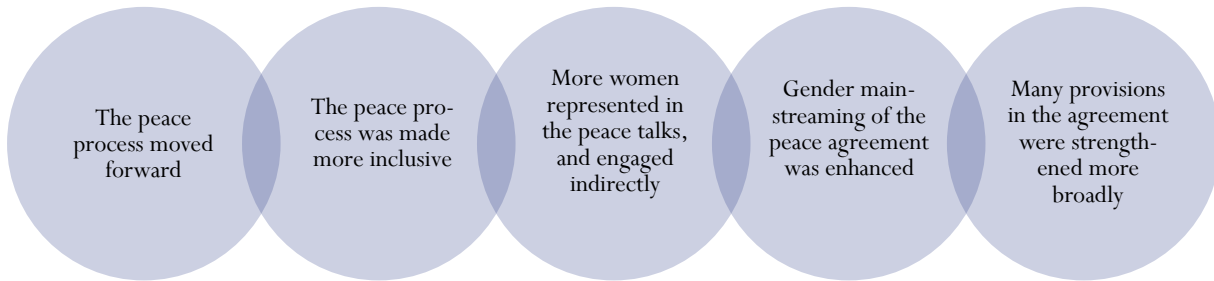
### Pressure & Persuasion

When the process was at a standstill, women's groups worked to break the deadlock. Often together with civil society actors, they met with key conflict parties, and pressured and persuaded them to keep working on a peaceful solution.



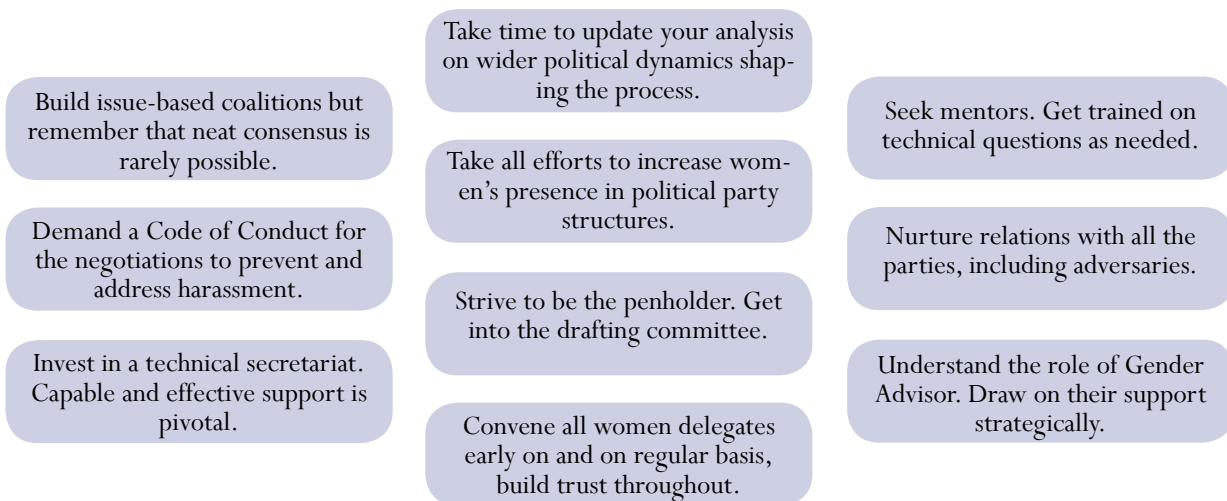
## Achievements

Even though it is not possible to ascertain causality to any single action in a complex process of peace negotiations, many observers note how their strategies contributed to the following:



## The Lessons Learned

Alongside notable achievements, several lessons were learned in the process<sup>i</sup>. With the wisdom of hindsight, South Sudanese women delegates would offer the following advice to colleagues in similar situations:



### Info Box: The South Sudan Peace Process 2013–2018

In December 2013, South Sudan descended into civil war. The violence began in the capital Juba when forces loyal to President Salva Kiir clashed with those supporting former Vice-President Riek Machar, and quickly spread out to rest of the country. Only a few days into the crisis, the country's neighbors in the Horn of Africa initiated efforts to end the fighting through their regional body, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). After nine broken ceasefires, the first comprehensive Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) was signed in August 2015. The stalled peace process was revived in late 2017, culminating in the signing of the Revitalized Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) on 12 September 2018. The agreement was signed by 45 South Sudanese representatives, including six women. It is estimated that nearly 400,000 South Sudanese have died due to the war and over four million people have been displaced.<sup>ii</sup>

<sup>i</sup>This publication draws on a roundtable discussion of South Sudanese women leaders held in Nairobi, Kenya, 15-16 December 2018. The group was diverse with representatives from political parties, academia, civil society, youth and women's networks and coalitions as well as the parliament – including those who served as observers and negotiators in the formal negotiations. The roundtable was co-organized by the National Transformational Leadership Institute (NTLI), Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) and the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA).

<sup>ii</sup> London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (2018). Estimates of crisis-attributable mortality in South Sudan, December 2013-April 2018, A statistical analysis; UNHCR (2019). South Sudan emergency.