



'Smart inclusion' in transitions from war to peace

Guidance from practice

Peace transitions offer opportunities to enhance the inclusion of marginalised groups in decision-making processes, and this is critical for peace and stability. But identifying and taking advantage of these opportunities in strategic ways is difficult. For donors, as external actors, pushing for inclusion can also become counter-productive. Evidence from practice-based research conducted by Conciliation Resources suggests that to maximise inclusion without undermining short-term stability, donors operating in peace transition contexts should:

1. **Support both stabilisation and inclusion from the start.** Define goals and strategies which combine stabilisation and increased, meaningful participation of specified excluded groups, as early as possible in the transition process. Making both goals explicit can help identify and manage the tensions between them more easily. Use analytical and monitoring frameworks that help disaggregate different marginalised groups.
2. **Use a pragmatic 'smart inclusion' approach.** Adaptive, incremental approaches that anticipate and respond to opportunities help manage the unpredictable nature of transitions. Target and build alliances with those seeking inclusion but also engage those threatened by change to mitigate pushback.
3. **Where donors have influence, advocate to widen space for meaningful participation in processes.** Promote political mechanisms which enhance participation. Advocate for transitional processes to include representatives of specified excluded groups, and the inclusion of 'hooks' for increased participation in processes, agreements, legislation and policies.
4. **Promote greater inclusion in informal, sub-national or issue-specific processes.** Inclusion and exclusion operate in different and novel ways in informal as well as sub-national institutions and structures. New and varied opportunities to support change exist at these levels compared to national and formal ones. These can produce more meaningful outcomes in people's everyday lives.

Increasing inclusion in peace transitions is a widely shared international policy goal in fragile and conflict-affected contexts where donors increasingly focus their investments.¹ This is reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals and other donor policies.² The 2018 World Bank and United Nations Report *Pathways to Peace* argues that, “inclusive decision-making is fundamental to sustaining peace at all levels, as are long-term policies to address economic, social, and political aspirations”.³

Exclusion, on the other hand, creates alienation and grievances that can lead to violent conflict. Inclusion – “the extent and manner in which the views and needs of parties to conflict and other stakeholders are represented, heard and integrated” – fosters social cohesion, a perception of fairness and therefore less likelihood of grievances feeding conflict.⁴

Yet, as the growing body of evidence on political settlements and elite bargains makes clear, there is a tension between the perceived need to stabilise post-conflict contexts (focusing on reducing elite incentives for violence and disruption) and the longer-term importance of broadening inclusion.⁵ Early efforts to include a diverse range of actors and interests are seen

as undermining the chances of reaching and sustaining a deal. On the other hand, limiting participation at this stage risks elite capture of decision-making, institutions and access to resources. This tension can hamper donors’ ability to support inclusion – an ability they acknowledge is already constrained by practical limits to their legitimacy and influence, a focus on short-term results, and the challenge of coordinating the approaches deployed by their different departments.

This guidance draws on practice-based research carried out by Conciliation Resources and partners in Colombia, Ethiopia, Nepal, Nigeria, Bougainville and Papua New Guinea as part of the Political Settlements Research Project (PSRP) (politicalsettlements.org).⁶ The findings emphasise the unpredictable trajectories of change during transitions, the opportunities for external actors to support inclusion, and the strategies employed by groups to influence processes. It validates the PSRP’s core finding that war to peace transitions emerge as ‘formalised political unsettlement’.⁷ This sees political arrangements in transitions as open to continued evolution and negotiation. A separate guidance note, drawn from the same research programme, provides more specific reflection on addressing gender in peace transitions.⁸

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Our research highlights that war to peace transitions can last many years. Donors are understandably wary of pushing inclusion too early for fear of undermining short-term stability and attracting pushback from power holders. For example, in Nepal, politicians and other elites pushed back against donor programmes supporting the political participation of excluded social groups, claiming they had overstepped their role.

But there is also a risk that in pushing stability ahead of inclusion the opportunities for the latter decrease

as the transition progresses – power holders often consolidate their position and the ‘unsettlement’ starts to slow. And many excluded groups see international actors as important allies, with a legitimate role to play in supporting them. Pushback can also be a response to endogenous processes too. The risks are therefore a reason for donors to take care, but not shy away from promoting inclusion. Indeed, in Nepal, activists today see the stance previously adopted by donors as having been important in helping to keep the inclusion of marginalised communities like lower

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2. For example: United Nations & World Bank (2018). *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*; Department for International Development, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office & the Ministry of Defence. *Building Stability Overseas Strategy* (2011); Department for International Development. *Building Stability Framework* (2017); Council of the European Union. *Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities* (2009)
3. United Nations & World Bank. *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*. (Washington, DC: 2018). <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337> [link accessed 2 May 2018]
4. United Nations. *Peacebuilding in the Aftermath of Conflict: Report of the Secretary General*, UN document A/67/499, S/2012/746 (8 October 2012) http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/399 [accessed 2 May 2018]
5. Pospisil, Jan & Alina Rocha Menocal. ‘Why Political Settlements Matter: Navigating Inclusion in Processes Of Institutional Transformation’ *Journal of International Development*, Vol. 29 No.5 (2017): 551–558.
6. Yousuf, Zahbia. *Beyond elite bargains: political settlements from the ground up* (London: Conciliation Resources, 2018); Close, Sophia. *Gendered Political Settlements: examining peace transitions in Bougainville, Nepal and Colombia*. (London: Conciliation Resources, 2018)
7. Bell, Christine & Jan Pospisil. *Navigating Inclusion in Transitions from Conflict: The Formalised Political Unsettlement*. University of Edinburgh School of Law Research Paper Series No. 2017/04.
8. Conciliation Resources. *Using gender to promote inclusion in peace transitions: Guidance from practice* (London: Conciliation Resources, May 2018)

Two steps forward, one step back – opportunity and resistance in transitions

The popular uprising in Nepal in spring 2006 led within six months to the abolition of the monarchy, peace talks between the government and Maoist rebels, and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The CPA reflected the Maoists' commitment to enhance political representation of diverse social groups through a complete restructuring of the state. Civil society activists and international donors also continued to promote social inclusion, notably of women and lower castes. The 2008 Constituent Assembly had a diverse membership and was intended to provide the primary democratic forum in which to renegotiate the administration of power in post-war Nepal. But neither it nor a second assembly established in 2013 was able to agree a revised, more inclusive constitution.

In 2015, in the aftermath of a devastating earthquake, political leaders concluded a new constitution. The process was dominated by a conservative, older, male elite that took advantage of the crisis to push through the new statute with minimal consultation. This however, led to many months of activism and demonstrations among groups who saw themselves as excluded from the process. Ultimately, after some concessions, a new agreement was reached and elections were held. Some of the inclusion gains for women and lower caste groups previously achieved in the transition had been lost, as the old guard closed ranks. Nevertheless, the new federal system has the potential to provide citizens from across Nepal's very diverse society with a political voice, and in the meantime many thousands of women, lower castes and other excluded groups have been engaged in debate and in other aspects of public life, locally and nationally.

caste or indigenous groups on the agenda at a time when the space for this issue was narrowing.

The choice of analytical frameworks used by donors also impacts their ability to identify inclusion opportunities. Frameworks that fail to disaggregate different marginalised groups, or which over-simplify context dynamics, can lead to options and entry-points being overlooked. In the Plateau state of Nigeria, recent farmer-herder tensions have been obscured by analysis focused on Boko Haram and inter-communal conflicts. This has led to the adoption of, for example, counter-extremism frameworks and subsequent approaches that overlook opportunities to introduce local and inclusive land allocation mechanisms and which could readily reduce conflict between herders and farmers.

To be more effective donors need to define explicit goals for both stability *and* inclusion in their strategies as early as possible, with a long-term horizon – we

would suggest at least a decade – during which time they should monitor progress towards both goals, and adjust accordingly. Their strategies need to:

- Contain clear indicators for measuring the progress of both goals: stabilisation, as well as the meaningful participation of different groups in processes and outcomes. By making both goals explicit, the tensions between them can be more easily identified and managed.
- Use frameworks that clearly identify different 'excluded groups', as well as the opportunities for and obstacles to inclusion faced by each, and the risk to stability if they remain excluded.
- Integrate diplomatic and development capabilities, which have complementary capacities but are often poorly coordinated, with development professionals more often focused on inclusion, and diplomats on stability.

2. Use a pragmatic 'smart inclusion' approach. Adaptive, incremental approaches that anticipate and respond to opportunities help manage the unpredictable nature of transitions. Target and build alliances with those seeking inclusion but also engage those threatened by change to mitigate pushback.

A sequenced, incremental approach is both practical and desirable, helping to avoid pushback and disruption. It allows agencies to respond when opportunities turn out to be less favourable to inclusion, or if an initial opening is later reversed as prior elites and clientelist systems reassert themselves. This happened in Nepal

when the political elite closed ranks as the risk of a return to civil war receded, and in Bougainville, where women, who had played a key peacebuilding role before the 2001 Peace Agreement, were subsequently excluded from formal decision-making structures instituted post-agreement.

Equally, new opportunities for the inclusion of particular groups arise as transitions evolve, for example in elections, where external support to excluded groups can help maximise their inclusion. Sometimes new opportunities are less predictable. For example, while the 2015 earthquake in Nepal was a key impetus for political elites to agree a long-delayed constitution, it also provided a potential opportunity for excluded groups to have a voice in defining and delivering relief and reconstruction. Yet donors with established presence and support to the transition failed to seize on this occasion.

It is important groups have the chance – and assistance if needed – to seize opportunities when circumstances create openings for their inclusion. For example, women, indigenous groups, sexual and gender minorities and lower caste groups took advantage of the stated political and social inclusion agendas of armed movements taking part in peace talks in Nepal and Colombia, to insist on a voice in the negotiation and/or transition processes, and recognition in the outcomes.

Donors need to adopt a ‘smart inclusion’ approach, characterised by:

- Incremental and “strategically opportunistic” approaches, to allow for the unpredictable nature of transitions. These need to be explicitly adaptive in design, with built-in mechanisms for the rapid reallocation of resources to take advantage of opportunities that arise.

- Alliances with a variety of people and organisations in civil society, politics, businesses and international agencies, to help identify and seize different kinds of opportunities as they emerge.
- Research and analysis to determine the opportunities and obstacles to inclusion for different marginalised groups. This should identify the degree to which their inclusion will enhance or undermine stability in the short term, and where there are entry points for improved participation. Analysis should also consider many facets of identity such as ethnicity, gender, age, religion, class, caste, geography and sexual orientation, and how these enable or block access to opportunities.
- Support to people and organisations as they take part in processes with which they are unfamiliar, to help ensure their participation is sustained and meaningful. This may include leadership development, analytical and tactical support, help in convening caucuses or lobbying coalitions, and local and cross-context learning opportunities.
- Engagement with those threatened by the prospect of change to minimise the risk of backlash. This includes analysis of which actors can be influenced, for example, shared learning from contexts in which new groups have been successfully accommodated, and supporting economic development opportunities that benefit existing and new entrants.

3. Where donors have influence, advocate to widen the space for meaningful participation in processes. Promote political mechanisms which enhance participation. Advocate for transitional processes to include representatives of specified excluded groups, and for the inclusion of ‘hooks’ for increased participation, in processes, agreements, legislation and policies.

Donors have varying degrees of influence over who participates in different processes of a transition. Nevertheless, they should take full advantage of the opportunities they do have, especially when they play a role as an external facilitator, advisor or funder. Inclusion is not just about numbers or who has a seat at the table, but also about the quality of participation. This is partly a function of the frameworks, processes or mechanisms adopted. Particular political mechanisms or systems by their very design can facilitate the participation of some groups over others – the mechanisms chosen influence inclusion outcomes.

For example, the federal nature of the new Nepalese constitution is likely to favour geographically located marginalised groups, but offers less to geographically

dispersed marginalised groups. This has to some extent been mitigated by the adoption of specific reserved seats at provincial level for Dalit women, for example. However, candidate lists are still drawn up by party leaders, so it may take some time for these measures to lead to genuine, independent influence by new entrants.

Political frameworks or mechanisms introduced with inclusion in mind can produce unintended consequences. Mechanisms such as power sharing or reserve seats for ethnic groups tend to reinforce the identity groups whose participation they are designed to facilitate – this may be a hindrance to pluralism over the longer term.

Donors can use their influence directly in processes they are involved with, or indirectly through agencies such as the UN, to advocate for inclusion. For example, they can:

- Deploy local or international expertise to demonstrate the opportunities and risks associated with different models of political participation, and make the case to and advise governments and other parties on adapting proposals where necessary.
- Advocate for 'hooks' to be built into agreements, and offer funding in support; for example, mandatory consultations and participatory and transparent monitoring processes that give excluded groups leverage vis a vis formal actors in the transition process.
- Support efforts which bring people from different social groups together around a common public interest, to help break down social divisions; for example, funding think tanks which generate policy-based rather than identity-based political ideas.
- Include the meaningful participation of marginalised groups as a condition of funding agreements and in programme design.

4. Promote greater inclusion in informal, sub-national or issue-specific processes.

Inclusion and exclusion operate in different and novel ways in sub-national and informal institutions and structures. New and varied opportunities to support change exist at these levels compared to the national, more formal ones, and these can produce more meaningful outcomes in people's everyday lives.

Widening inclusion in formal, national processes is important, but donors can also encourage and support inclusion elsewhere, for example in sub-national, local, or more informal decision-making processes and mechanisms. Exclusion-inclusion dynamics often vary widely in different parts of a country: localised structures and practices of exclusion, including within the household, are often felt most keenly by people in their everyday lives, and can in effect preclude participation and influence in national level processes. Equally, informal and sub-national processes present inclusion opportunities that may be overlooked and which may have greater relative impact on people's lives and on localised tensions and conflict. Such processes may also be more accessible to donor involvement, compared with higher stakes formal and/or national processes.

Our research provided a wide range of examples of opportunities for wider participation in informal or sub-national processes (see box *Inclusive land governance in Nigeria*). In Nepal, Bougainville, and some regions of Ethiopia, the establishment of new local government has been an important mechanism to counter elite capture at the national level by formalising quotas for marginalised groups, as well as increasing the number of those brought into a non-violent political process.

Yet the risk of resistance can be equally acute and should be anticipated, balanced and mitigated. For example, in Colombia and Nepal, mass mobilisation campaigns provided opportunities for wide-ranging informal participation that generated significant political impact. Yet our research highlights that international agencies have encountered difficulties trying to support mass movements or other types of popular mobilisation directly. It suggests there are useful openings to provide more indirect support, for example, through partnership with local and international civil society that have established and accountable local networks.

Inclusive land governance in Nigeria

Local conflicts between pastoralist and farmers over access to land are endemic in parts of rural Nigeria, and have been exacerbated in recent years by demographic and political change, overwhelming semi-formal seasonal land allocation systems in which both parties used to collaborate. Armed violence is too often the result. Pastoralists feel – often with good reason – they are excluded from decision-making. There are opportunities to adapt and re-establish collaborative, inclusive mechanisms governing land access, allowing crop and livestock production to co-exist. This is something that can be achieved locally, case by case, with the right support.

Donors can help people take advantage of sub-national, informal or issue-specific opportunities to increase inclusion of marginalised groups by:

- Engaging with relevant stakeholders, such as civic networks, customary institutions, and the business sector, to identify options for advancing inclusion agendas, and with potential allies for specific groups and processes.
- Using their influence over specific sub-national or issue-specific processes that they help to fund, to ensure that these are open to diverse participation in design, implementation and monitoring; for example, local elections or conflict prevention mechanisms.
- Extending the practice of supporting locally devolved or federal units of government and local civil society to build inclusive, collaborative ways of working on specific projects and issues of common interest.
- Continuing to explore how to engage with informal social movements, for example, by funding international or national civil society organisations who may be at less risk than sub-national networks and organisations and carry the necessary trust and legitimacy to work with them.

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Conciliation Resources is an independent international organisation working with people in conflict to prevent violence, resolve conflicts and promote peaceful societies. We believe that building sustainable peace takes time. We provide practical support to help people affected by violent conflict achieve lasting peace. We draw on our shared experiences to improve peacebuilding policies and practice worldwide.



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