

**Owning the process:
mechanisms for political participation
of the public in peacemaking**

Conciliation Resources joint analysis workshop report

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I. Executive summary

In February 2002, Conciliation Resources brought together people working on conflict transformation initiatives to exchange ideas and experiences of efforts to promote mechanisms for political participation of the public in the peace processes in Colombia, Guatemala, Mali, Northern Ireland, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Somalia, and South Africa. Participants found the opportunity to learn from comparative experiences elsewhere to be valuable for better understanding the dilemmas they encounter. This report summarises the discussions, explores the reasons why public participation may make a difference in helping to build a sustainable peace – as well as some of the reasons why it can fall short of this potential – and offers recommendations for process design and the roles of civil society, foreign governments and international agencies. The report describes key issues, mechanisms, and phases of peacemaking and provides short examples from specific experiences. It is based solely on the information and views expressed during the workshop.

Discussion focussed on the question of how those outside the warring parties can generate a voice capable of shaping the political content of peace agreements and for promoting processes capable of generating structural, social and political transformation. They examined some of the key challenges in mobilising broad public involvement and in engaging the diverse sectors and competing interests that exist within societies. They looked at some of the roles played by actors from different arenas – such as foreign governments and international agencies, political and social leaders, and the media – and how they can support or displace public initiatives. They described experiences with mechanisms such as national peace conferences, civil society assemblies and referendums and gave examples of strategies for social mobilisation and political engagement in peace processes. Recognising the importance of political participation at the local level, participants considered the dilemmas and opportunities for linking these efforts with national processes. They focused on how all these challenges need to be addressed at every phase of peacemaking from preparation, through to the formal political negotiations, and on to the implementation of agreements and the consolidation of the process for conflict transformation. One of the key principles for peacemaking that emerged from the workshop was the importance of generating broad ownership of both the process and the agreements reached by the conflict-affected public in all its diversity.

II. Joint analysis workshop and project summary

Many people involved in peacemaking and conflict transformation seek to ensure that peace processes address the underlying causes of conflict and are responsive to the needs of all those affected by it. Yet process mechanisms for enabling public participation in the political negotiations for reaching and implementing peace agreements have not been studied systematically. There are few resources that can inform those seeking to address this challenge in their own process and who would like the opportunity to learn from experiences elsewhere. This project is aimed at addressing this gap. It will support the development of mechanisms for public participation in the political negotiations to reach peace agreements by: (a) engaging and supporting people currently trying to address this challenge in their own conflict situation; (b) documenting previous experiences so as to enable comparative learning; and (c) informing international policy-makers, negotiators and intermediaries. After months of consultation with peacemakers around the world with the aim of hearing their concerns and dilemmas on promoting popular participation, Conciliation Resources (CR) held the joint analysis workshop documented here. The participants, listed at the end of the report, contributed their extensive and direct experience of promoting public engagement in peacemaking. Through facilitated discussion, the group presented case studies, identified cross-cutting conceptual issues, prioritised them for discussion and discussed strategies to address them.

In autumn 2002, CR will publish a full, thematic edition of the online and print publication *Accord: an international review of peace processes*. It will explore the issues presented here in greater depth and feature case studies on the mechanisms used in Guatemala, Mali, and South Africa, among others. It will provide detailed documentation and analysis of how the mechanisms described briefly in this report worked and analyse their impact on conflict transformation. This will be followed by an international policy seminar to help promote awareness of public participation in the implementation of peace processes. CR would like to thank the UK Department for International Development, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and Swedish SIDA for their general support of CR and the Accord Programme and the United States Institute of Peace for their support of the forthcoming edition of *Accord*.

III. Why public participation in political peacemaking?

Wars and the processes to end them can be a defining period in the development of a country. They can shape the relations between the antagonist groups, often lead to a reordering of state institutions and the economy, as well as influence the fundamental political and social qualities of the society. The wreckage of war seems to inevitably compel attempts to end it; thus from destruction comes the potential for substantial change. The events that together comprise what is commonly referred to as a 'peace process' are the political vehicle to begin to make this transition. The nature of this process – who participates (including to what degree, at what stage, and in what capacity), the agreements reached, and how they are implemented – can have direct influence over the future form and content of the constitutional and governance structures of the country and the relationships between its inhabitants.

The project is focused on peace processes addressing protracted, violent conflicts within a country ('internal wars') or – where self-determination issues are prominent – between peoples in inter-connected territories. These conflicts generally arise because existing state systems have not been able to satisfy the basic interests and needs of all sectors of the public that live within them. The public space is typically fragmented, often separating along persistent social, economic, and political divides so that certain groups are excluded from opportunities to participate equally in the life of the country or to live in the way they prefer. The grievances generated by these inequalities are at least part of the underlying causes of the conflict and generally are the main substantive issues that need to be addressed to create the basis for a sustainable peace. The desire to address these grievances can be a key factor mobilising combatants and their supporters. Yet there are also typically large numbers of people who may be effected by these problems but do not choose to take up weapons.

Another quality that is common in many war-torn societies is that the public as a whole is not able to participate effectively in the political processes that govern the country – particularly in times of a political 'emergency'. In some cases certain groups are excluded; in other cases the state is 'captured' by a small clique and the vast majority have little means to hold them accountable or make them responsive to the needs of the people. Either way, the capacity of members of the public to have political influence is undermined. Although this is a substantive problem in itself, there is also a significant process problem: how can members of the public engage effectively in political dialogue and have input into decision-making?

The way a peace process is carried out may provide the key to beginning a constructive transition. It can lead to fundamental changes that better address the constituent needs of the public and thus create the basis for a more sustainable peace. Peace processes that enable broad-based participation and public debate have the potential for laying the foundations for political dialogue, problem-solving and constructive action needed to move toward a more participatory and democratic country. It is possible that this type of process can help to transform conflict relationships and generate a broad public consensus for a more inclusive state and society.

Thus peace processes may provide opportunities for social and political reconciliation by the act of making and keeping agreements with one another. Given the fact that peace agreements are inevitably between sets of former antagonists, who often – though not always – have a strong social base and organised constituencies, it should also be noted that the act of making these agreements actually affirms and gives recognition to some degree of the pluralism that exists within a nation state. It seems that peace processes can create opportunities for enabling previously marginalized groups to have a voice in shaping arrangements that will allow them to participate effectively in the future. This opportunity may be lost, however, if they are excluded because they have not entered into armed struggle.

Despite this transformative potential, in many cases official political negotiations occur behind closed doors – frequently in a foreign country – between the representatives of the armed combatant groups. Only rarely are there opportunities for broad-based public participation in either shaping the contents of the peace treaty or for agreeing to its terms. Political parties and other civil society institutions that did not take up weapons are unlikely to be represented at the negotiating table. A process relying exclusively on negotiations between leaders of the combatant groups might result in an agreement that satisfies their core interests but it may not address the underlying substantive issues that are of concern to the public. While strategy may be effective for ending the violence, it may exacerbate public mistrust and undermine the legitimacy of the agreement – nor does the process facilitate reconciliation between communities and sectors divided by war.

IV. Experiences and Issues

This 'problematique' guided the formulation of the project and informed the discussion during the workshop. Most participants were engaged with processes that went beyond the problem of how to end political violence, challenging as this may be. Discussion concentrated on the 'big issues' of enabling social change through processes that lead to transformation of deep-rooted conflict. Many saw the main challenges as how to build participation, shape the agenda, create conditions for justice, deal with those who have motives for blocking these changes, and consolidate the process.

A. *Politics and participation*

Participants stressed that public participation is not an end in itself but a means to bring about change and to develop a new political direction for the state. Peace processes can optimally provide the opportunity for structural, social and political transformation, yet are frequently appropriated by powerbrokers to pursue their own ends. Many believed that those who initiate and engage in armed conflict should not be able to impose the terms of peace on the population as a whole. This could result in a process that merely recycles traditional power structures instead of transforming the conditions that create conflict – or one that recycles old power to re-legitimise it through new structures.

It was observed that peace and politics cannot be divorced. The issue is how to involve ordinary people in developing a political agenda that guides the negotiations and the agreements concerning governance and the structure of state institutions. Transforming 'the principles of politics into the politics of principles' is a great challenge. One way may be to raise awareness and mobilise public opinion around the main substantive issues so as to counterbalance the power of opportunists. Those outside the warring parties may need to **develop a political voice** that articulates new scenarios for peaceful coexistence. This could involve activists politicising their social action so as to gain ownership of the agenda, stressing the invigoration of popular sovereignty as their basic organising principle.

Peace talks tend to emerge at times when the government's authority is weakened. If people are organised, this context can create a space where they can assert themselves so as to participate in the political negotiations. Yet in the post-agreement period, government authority is typically re-established. If that results in a retrenchment of the old political structures of control, it may be difficult to sustain the public's political participation. Furthermore, once the peace agreement has been signed, it is very difficult to keep the process going and to open up talks on new substantive issues. Participants debated whether civil society peace activists could engage in politics more effectively by constituting themselves as political parties so as to be able to participate in electoral processes. Most agreed on the necessity of democratic peacebuilding prior to and after formal agreements have been reached. They also recognised the importance of establishing permanent institutions that enable participation of ordinary people.

Participants were concerned by the potential problem of **superficial participation**. This is perhaps particularly important when the society has a deep tradition of exclusion, for example when the state was formed in the context of colonialism or created with the goal of enabling the dominance of one group or sector over the rest of the population. This raised the possibility that if civil society is not well organised and able to promote clear agendas, mechanisms to promote involvement may ultimately be of limited use. This could entrench a debilitating cynicism in public life and further engrain conflict dynamics in the social fabric.

B. *Ownership and diverse voices*

Most stressed that the key process challenge is to ensure the widest ownership possible of the peace process. Reaching an agreement does not necessarily ensure that the public accepts it; 'agreements' can be the trigger for further disagreement. Without proper ownership, peace is less likely to be sustainable. This principle has both pragmatic and transformative implications: when different sectors of the populace are committed to the agreement because they feel it is their own, they can serve as a bulwark against those who might want to take up arms again to pursue their own self-interests. This can be seen as the development of **social consensus**. It was observed that sometimes it is more helpful to work towards maximum consensus / minimum agreement than the opposite. If ownership is not sufficiently shared, then excluded political and social groupings may pursue their interests elsewhere. This could mean that both the political negotiations and the agreements they reach will be sidelined.

Participants emphasised that as the '**public**' is **heterogeneous**, mechanisms for promoting public participation need to address the diverse and often contradictory aspirations between different sectors and communities – including those that may be in conflict with each other. Civil society organisations can

reflect these highly divergent interests; some may be opposed to each other and closely allied with groups waging the war. Many of the participants had experiences based in a **multi-sectoral approach** to public involvement. These involve representatives of organised civil society, including groups that promote the interests of women, youth, religious organisations, traditional authorities, political parties, trade unions, business associations, and so on. Multi-sectoral processes can enable diverse agendas to feed into the process. If agreements address these agendas to at least the minimal satisfaction of all involved, then they will tend to be committed to the outcomes. The process design can be significant in shaping the outcomes. For example, one pointed out that in their process, consultations typically occurred within sectors rather than between them. Ultimately, their engagement was unable to generate a broad-based consensus on a political vision capable of reshaping the direction of the state.

Some questioned whether the **originating impulse** shapes the quality of process ownership. Since the collapse of the central government in Somalia, the UN organised twelve conferences that focused on the leaders of armed groups and marginalised the representatives of unarmed groups or sectors. These experiences of trying to reconstitute a central governmental authority tended to intensify conflict dynamics and political fragmentation. In 2000, the Arta process took place in Djibouti led by Somali civil society actors based on methods that drew on traditional decision-making / consensus building processes. At an initial meeting, over 300 clan elders met to create a framework. This was followed by a conference involving more than 3,200 people – including from women's groups, religious groups, and business groups as well as the diaspora, clan elders, and some armed groups. Although the ownership of this process by a group of Somalis represented a significant development in reintegrating the Somali polity, some key stakeholders remained outside the process. Notably, the *de facto* administrations in Somaliland and Puntland did not feel sufficient ownership of the process and do not recognise its outcomes – thus pointing to a significant challenge for the next stage.

Others stressed that traditionally marginalised voices need to be well represented. Several brought up examples of the dilemmas experienced by **indigenous peoples** who are excluded from many peace processes. Nevertheless some indigenous groups have seized on peace negotiations as an opportunity to promote their aspirations. For example, in Guatemala over the course of the war and during the peace process, self-identified indigenous communities broke into the political scene and developed an autonomous political voice. Similarly in Mindanao, the indigenous 'Lumad' peoples were initially left out of the peace processes involving the Philippines government and the armed groups ostensibly promoting the aspirations of the Muslim Moro people. Yet they have increasingly sought to assert themselves in the process and are now able to assign a representative to the technical committee for the negotiations.

Many participants were particularly interested in the **role of women** in peace process. A number of cases revealed the necessity of making explicit provisions for direct representation of women to ensure that they had 'a place at the table' in the peace process. In South Africa, the mechanisms for selecting representatives were designed to ensure women's participation. When parties drew up list for delegates to the constitutional conventions, it was mandated that at least every third person would be a woman.

Northern Ireland: the Women's Coalition

The IRA's ceasefire in 1994 paved the way for multi-party peace talks hosted by the UK and Irish governments. The organisers faced a dilemma over how to choose the parties to participate in the talks. They decided that the public should vote on the ten political groupings whose representatives would be charged with negotiating an agreement. This plan met with strong objections from a group of women who claimed that this system would be likely to exclude women's representation in the process. The governments responded by saying that if they wanted to participate, they could stand in the elections. They responded by constituting themselves as the Women's Coalition political party. After a hastily organised campaign, they won ninth place in the elections. They sent two representatives to the talks, where – as anticipated – they were the only women delegates. Subsequently they played a vital role in the process, functioning in the margins between the two main opposing political blocks to find common ground and keep the process moving. This caused some to observe that they seemed to act less as a 'womens interest party' and more as an 'NGO party'. After the agreement was reached two years later, they faced the challenge of deciding whether to disband or to run for office in the new Northern Ireland Assembly. Eventually they decided to remain a political party so as to sustain their political voice.

One of the biggest difficulties for peace activists in promoting participation is the resistance of the **combatant groups**, many of whom are reluctant to open the space for more direct public involvement. If this is overcome, there is the challenge of using the initial openings to build a broader and more strategic involvement, especially of grassroots activists and ordinary people. It may also be important to involve significant sectors who might sabotage the process. For example, in South Africa, many viewed the

security forces as potentially the greatest threat to peacemaking. The organisers were therefore careful to involve the police in the process, while at the same time investigating the activities of covert agents thought to be fermenting destabilising violence.

Participants stressed the quality of **political leadership** as decisive in articulating a path forward that enables people to 'think the unthinkable'. Yet in many cases, politicians or war leaders prioritise personal self-interest over concern to meet real needs. This is particularly true of those who have a vested interest in the political economy of the war. Change can occur when governments and armed groups realise that they cannot achieve their objectives alone. The question is how to precipitate that moment of realisation. One of the factors that may help is a public climate that encourages leaders to develop a long-term, 'big picture' vision for the society. This may diminish the tendency to pursue exclusively short-term interests. Others were concerned with the involvement of **societal leaders** in peace processes. As leadership systems vary between societies, there is a need to understand existing societal structures of authority and decision-making. Several suggested that it is important to involve traditional leaders or authority figures as they can help to ensure legitimacy of process as well as its accessibility in the communities where they are rooted. Another significant source of leadership exists in civil society organisations. Yet the capacity of this leadership may be diminished as a consequence of war. Sometimes they are targeted by combatant groups and killed. They may also be either co-opted or marginalised by joining or staying out of positions in a post-agreement government when politics begins to return to 'business as usual'. This can pose a significant challenge for sustaining public participation.

C. International support for locally-led initiatives

Participants recognised that no war exists in isolation; each takes place within a wider set of geopolitical dynamics shaped by the agendas of external actors with an interest in the situation. The geopolitical context can have a huge impact on the quality of a peace process. It can shape both the process dynamics and the content of the agreements reached. Some are specific to the conflict; others are more global in character – such as the East-West superpower confrontation from the 1950s to the 1980s or the current 'war against terrorism'. In most cases, the broader regional environment was crucial in shaping the political context of the conflict and peace process and neighbouring governments figured prominently. Therefore a crosscurrent throughout the discussions concerned the role of international agencies and foreign governments and how they interface with the local public peacemaking efforts.

Participants emphasised the important distinction between **appropriate international cooperation versus international intervention**. Many came from situations where foreign involvement in support of one or more of the combatant parties had been a major factor in sustaining the war. Many foreign governments and international agencies have traditionally been biased toward actively or tacitly supporting the party to the conflict – typically the governing group – whom they perceive as being able to restore stability, even if many consider it to merely repress the conflict. Several voiced their concern that the current geopolitical climate is particularly conducive to intervention because of the resurgence of *realpolitik* approaches based on 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend' strategies.

Nevertheless, most participants agreed that international actors can provide significant resources – political, technical, and financial – in support of peacemaking efforts. An important form of international cooperation is when a number of countries create a '**friends of the peace process**' group to actively coordinate their efforts in supporting peace, often by serving as 'observers' of the process and 'guarantors' of the agreement. Most suggested that these efforts were on the whole quite helpful. Yet their central concern was for internationally derived initiatives to strengthen and complement initiatives for public participation rather than displace local ownership of the process or shift the agenda away from the priorities articulated by society.

Most recognised that **international mediators** can play an extremely constructive role at certain points in the process. Yet these figures are not accountable directly to the people of the war-torn society. Many felt they could optimally use their leverage to encourage – or even sponsor – processes that are inclusive and increase the transparency of the process and the accountability of those who negotiate agreements. A number of participants commented on positive roles played in particular by Norwegian intermediaries; this led one participant to propose building the capacities of a 'Norway of the South' to intervene as a third party and redress the balance away from interventions by the United States or European governments. There may be an inverse equation whereby the more foreign mediators dominate a process, the less there is a likelihood of opportunities for public involvement. Furthermore, in one case, it seemed that the international mediators did not operate out of a long-term strategic vision for creating a new political content for the state and its institutions. Instead the process largely reaffirmed the status quo of existing elite structures.

Some international mediators may not be sensitised to the need for public participation as a priority – or fully appreciate the cultural resources within the society that could be mobilised for peacemaking. Others may believe that because their mandate is to bring a speedy end to the fighting, they focus on those who represent the warring parties because it may seem unnecessary to complicate the process by involving others. There are cases, however, where the mediators have appeared to behave opportunistically, pursuing their own institutional or geopolitical agendas with little attention to the long-term needs of the war-affected society. This sparked one to call them the ‘peace vultures’ – circling conflict situations to further their own interests. Whatever the motive, the result may be a process that circumvents the opportunity for transformative social change – even if it does bring an end to the fighting.

Participants recognised that both international mediators and domestic civil society organisations need to be proactive in addressing these dilemmas. If they assume a role, then mediators and the institutions that sponsor them could encourage mechanisms to support public participation and ensure that the design of their interventions addresses this concern. For example, although it may be advantageous to host talks in foreign locations at certain points in the process, talks held almost exclusively abroad may create further barriers to local participation and ownership. If international mediators base the process solely on the aspirations of the fighting groups, they may overlook issues of central importance to the people affected by the conflict and marginalise civil society. Yet participants also recognised the responsibility of civil society actors to establish direct relations with international actors involved in the peace process. They may need to be proactive to reclaim the agenda for the public interest.

D. Phases of participation in peacemaking

The process of working towards peace is undertaken step by step. As such, reaching a formal peace agreement is only a ‘moment’ – though possibly a defining one – in the overall peace process. Because a peace accord is a piece of paper that can be disregarded if people choose to do so, there is a need to understand both the process of reaching the agreement as well as the process of supporting its implementation and consolidation – and how these connect to an overall transformation of the conflict. It can be useful to examine the dilemmas and opportunities experienced by those wanting to promote public participation at each of these different phases of the peacemaking process. Although it is useful to look at the developmental tasks involved in each phase, it is also important to note that peacemaking is typically an iterative rather than a linear process. While in the midst of a process, it can often seem as though little progress is being made: consultations are conducted and seemingly ignored; talks are initiated and then broken off; agreements are reached and then abandoned. Nevertheless, retrospectively, it can seem that the situation has moved forward.

1. Preparation

Participants recognised that mechanisms for public participation in peace processes do not occur unless people make them happen. This typically involves a considerable degree of both advocacy to demand that their voices are heard and mobilisation to develop the capacity to respond effectively as and when opportunities open. The preparatory phase is thus a time for mobilising voices, formulating substantive agendas, designing processes, and developing a popular constituency to support and engage in conflict resolution. In addition to preparing processes, participants also emphasised the importance of preparing people so that they feel comfortable and are able to make effective contributions. One stressed the importance of training and education, commenting it can be disempowering and unproductive to invite people to attend meetings if they do not understand the operating procedures of the relevant mechanism. Organisers and facilitators need to take steps to enable accessibility of these systems. For example, broad public participation can be impaired if the environment is intimidating or exclusive, as can happen through the over-reliance on procedural rules or a formal style of business suits and titles.

If civil society organisations and a significant proportion of the public is sufficiently prepared to engage in peacemaking, it can both create a climate conducive to negotiations and help to ensure that the social infrastructure is developed for their voices to be heard as and when conditions become conducive for peace talks. Participants were also sensitive to **sequencing** of mechanisms. For example, consultation on the contents of a peace agreement after it has been negotiated and signed is likely to be of only limited value because it is difficult to incorporate substantive input into the agreement at that stage. There was also caution that powerbrokers may seek to marginalise civil society voices after initial consultations so as to dominate decision-making and reconsolidate control in the post-agreement period.

Guatemala: multi-sectoral consultations

With the easing of super-power confrontation in the late 1980s, efforts were made to address the wars that had wracked Central America for decades. **Esquipulas II**, a regional inter-governmental process for promoting peace, was the catalyst for talks between the government and the insurgents in Guatemala. Armed conflict was no longer an exclusively domestic concern and both government and URNG leaders began to search for a new basis of legitimacy. In 1987 this led to the creation of a government-sponsored and church-led **National Reconciliation Commission** comprised of representatives of the 12 political parties, the government, the army and the Catholic Church. In 1989 it organised the **Grand National Dialogue** based on talks with 47 sectoral organisations – such as unions, business associations, and agrarian cooperatives. It formed 15 thematic commissions to define the key topics to be addressed in peace negotiations. A key substantive outcome was the recommendation that negotiations should address the structural conditions generating conflict, rather than focus only on arrangements to end the military confrontation. This was followed in 1990 by the **Oslo process** of consultations between the URNG and five sectoral groupings. The groups included in this process were generally those with affinities to either the government or the URNG and did not necessarily have sufficient organisational reach to involve the Guatemalan public. Yet the consultations helped to generate public opinion in support of negotiations, inhibited ultra-right wing forces, established the legitimacy of political dialogue with the URNG, and generally created a political mood conducive to a peace process. The Grand National Dialogue and Oslo processes contributed to the development of a framework agreement that shaped the UN mediated political negotiations between the government and URNG.

2. Participation in formal political negotiations

At the heart of the workshop discussions was the question of how representatives of non-combatant groups and the public as a whole can have a voice in the formal negotiations to reach a peace agreement. Specific mechanisms for achieving this are discussed in the section on the social infrastructure for participation. One of the key challenges identified by participants is developing **mechanisms to communicate both with organised constituencies and the wider public** so that their perspectives can be reflected in decision-making. In Northern Ireland, the multi-party talks leading the Belfast Agreement took place over two years. Although the public was aware of them, there were few official channels to enable input into the content of the agreement being drafted. This created a degree of resentment amongst organised civil society and also created a barrier for 'bringing along' the public in support of the agreement. In South Africa, a multi-track approach was used with political groupings in decision-making roles in the formal negotiations alongside public consultations and popular education. The negotiations deployed a representative decision-making model, with party members delegating their representatives to negotiate on their behalf and then holding them accountable for their decisions. This was complemented by broad public consultation on the contents of the new constitution so that everyone would feel that they had an opportunity to articulate their perspectives, interests and ideas. Consultation meetings were held at the community level across the country and there were collection boxes in public locations where people could contribute their written submissions. Emphasis was also placed on educating the public about the draft constitution, through radio programmes and pocket-size booklets given to every household, which used a story-board format to explain the constitution.

Another challenge related to the tensions that occur when civil society representatives are inter-positioned within bi-lateral negotiations between representatives of the armed factions. Participants explored how they can assert themselves into this role in the first place and then keep an influential voice once there. The Guatemalan experience revealed the complexity of this challenge.

Guatemala: Civil Society Assembly (ASC)

In Guatemala, the challenge was to consolidate the initial opening to civil society participation following the Grand National Dialogue and the Oslo consultation processes. Following the negotiation of a framework agreement, an elected assembly was formed comprising representatives of ten social sectors. These included those previously involved and, for the first time, delegates from sectors representing indigenous peoples and women. The ASC was mandated to draft consensus papers on seven substantive negotiating themes. The themes were addressed sequentially. Each sector presented its position on the specific theme and the issues were then debated until they were able to prepare a consensus paper. Many of the ASC's proposals were adopted in the drafting of the relevant peace accord on the topic. Yet the papers on indigenous affairs, the role of the army, and on socio-economic reforms were substantially altered in the final agreements on these topics. While the ASC was decisive in the early stages of negotiations, even before the final signing ceremony it began to lose political influence. There were a number of reasons for this. First was the exodus of civil society leaders –

especially those associated with the old left – to assume new political roles. Second, the industrialist sector began to question the mandate of the ASC and promote fora that it claimed were more open and representative of the public. Third, the structure of the formal political negotiations privileged bipartisan talks between the government and the URNG. As the process advanced, these old 'conflict elites' began to exclude the other voices and increasingly viewed the ASC as inconvenient. In the end, the ASC lost its internal cohesion. This created a vacuum at the moment when attention was needed to foster consolidation of the process and implementation of the agreements. Crucially, the ASC had not devoted significant attention to monitoring and implementation tasks to ensure that the agreements resulted in practical change. Instead it had moved from one topic to the next without assessing implementation of the previous agreements. Furthermore, although its documents and the eventual accords were strong on principles, they tended to overlook the development of clear methodologies and programmes for achieving them. Thus the government could claim that they were impossible to fulfil. The monitoring role was eventually designated to a newly formed commission of 'honourables.' Yet they were new to the process and had neither a popular base nor an inclination to maintain channels for participation.

3. Implementation and consolidation

Participants emphasised the need to resource the implementation phase. It is when sustained financial, technical, political support can be crucial for ensuring that the agreement becomes more than simply a piece of paper. It was also observed that ownership of the process becomes crucial at this stage. If the public and organised civil society have been excluded from the process or believe that it has not addressed their real needs, they will be less likely to work proactively towards its implementation. Without a broad public constituency in support of it, there are few safeguards against those who want to derail the agreement. Furthermore, it is not enough to simply have a mechanical application of the agreement. The quality of public involvement that may have characterised the preparation and negotiation phases needs to be consolidated and institutionalised.

Mali: regional concertations and community peacemaking

In Mali, political negotiations were not, in themselves, able to provide the foundations for peace. It was only when civil society at the regional and local levels became involved that the conflict could be transformed. The peace process was intended to resolve both the challenge of a democratic transition after decades of authoritarian governance and an inter-regional civil war between the north and south of the country. Some of the central issues of governance were addressed through a National Conference in 1991. Yet neither it nor an Algerian mediated peace agreement between the government and some of the armed groups were able to bring peace to the north. The government recognised the need to address the social dimension of peacemaking. In 1994 it instituted a series of '**regional concertations**'. Government officials held sectoral consultations – each focused on a topic such as women, rural populations or education – in every region. The initiative comprised 17 conferences chaired by two or three ministers, each of which lasted three days and involved a total of almost 3,000 people. This process led to a wide recognition on the need to address the situation in the north on the basis of equal rights for northerners. Nevertheless, the violence continued. By the end of the year, the government admitted that it could not find a solution to the conflict. The president called on civil society to use its creativity to address the situation. Norwegian Church Aid supported an initiative to hold six community meetings in an area where reconciliation seemed to be most difficult. The meetings were organised by well-respected local figures and involved participants from inter-dependent communities in a region. They met to develop a consensus on how to address the problems they faced. The first three meetings were so successful that other communities across the north requested support to hold their own meetings. In response, a series of approximately fifty **inter-community meetings** were held across the north, some of which had up to 1,500 participants. These village elders, religious and community leaders took responsibility for negotiating local arrangements to control arms, to reintegrate displaced people and the fighters, and other sensitive issues within their remit. Their conclusions were then funnelled into **consolidation meetings**. These meetings and a parallel programme of demobilisation of rebels jointly run by the rebel movements, the new government and the UNDP led to a national reconciliation ceremony in March 1996 involving the destruction of decommissioned weapons in the 'Flame of Peace' in Timbuktu. While the country has experienced peace since that time, significant challenges remain – particularly in tackling the problems of poverty.

E. Social infrastructure for participation

The participants had experience with a number of different mechanisms for enabling public involvement in political peace agreements. Most involved some degree of both Bottom → Up social mobilisation and Top → Down elite accommodation of civil society voices in formulating political agreements.

1. Social mobilisation

Most recognised the importance of building public capacity for political participation and the challenge of mobilising people to articulate their experiences and aspirations so as to engage in political dialogue. Many were concerned with how to mobilise and organise **mass participation**. Some reflected that consultations in their country may have been over-reliant on a limited strata of organised groups because they have an articulated agenda and supposedly represent constituencies. Yet if the quality of constituency engagement is shallow, then the process may not result in widely 'owned' agreements. There were, however, a number of experiences where the general public had a more or less direct voice in the peace process. The Malian experience revealed that once large numbers of people at the local level engaged directly in developing ways to address issues of direct concern to them, it was possible to transform the conflict dynamics. The South African approach for involving people in the development of the new constitution is another example of efforts to encourage broad public engagement.

A particular concern was on methods for mobilising people in a highly militarised environment, where trauma and fear may be pervasive. Participants gave examples of how they are addressing this challenge in Sri Lanka. In the predominantly ethnic Tamil northeast of the country, the Theatre Action Group has used traditional ritual forms to mobilise large numbers of people to express their feelings and aspirations so as to lay foundations for political expression and engagement. The name is significant: 'theatre' as a safe space; 'action' to enable spontaneously reaction and expression; and through this experience a 'group' is formed. The popular expression enabled by their activities has been particularly meaningful because many Sinhala people have few opportunities to know or understand the perspectives of Tamil people and this has created barriers for political dialogue. In the south, Sinhala Buddhist monks and other religious leaders have formed the Inter-Religious Alliance for National Unity to become engaged in dialogue and peace promotion activities. As they are close to the people in their communities, they have significant influence and can contribute to the development of a pro-peace constituency.

2. Communications strategy for peace

Related to the social mobilisation was the issue of how to use information to empower peacemaking. Several pointed to the need to **mobilise thinking** amongst the public through the use of metaphors and teaching. They stressed the need for vision in the social change process and to help people understand the broader picture. Activists can organise peace constituencies around central ideas and values. Some emphasised the importance of 'humanising the enemy' as a part of this vision. There is a pragmatic dimension to this as "you do not make peace with your friends; you make peace with your enemies."

Most were interested in the **role of the media**. The press typically plays a catalyst role by identifying and framing the topics seen as important. This can be problem when the dominant media outlets are nationalistic or reactionary. In Sri Lanka, mainstream media tends to promote Sinhala nationalist aspirations and is silent on the perspectives of the Tamil communities. This is one of the reasons why it has been important to mobilise the capacity of Tamils to express their aspirations. In Guatemala, the press was initially supportive of the peace dialogue and helped to create an enabling climate for inclusive talks. Yet after the agreement was crafted, many mainstream media outlets were concerned that it did not promote their interests and then began to work actively against the agreement. Some of the right-wing parties that did not have a direct role in the negotiations found in the press a powerful channel for making their views known.

3. Peace advocates

In many situations, civil society peace advocates have played crucial roles in developing a public environment that supports the peace process and the implementation of agreements reached. A number of participants pointed to the need for **building the skills and capacities** of these advocates. In South Africa, there were well-established structures for participation through the political party system. The African National Congress deployed a cadre system to educate activists for political leadership. This enabled them to 'grow people politically' through consciousness-raising. Another challenge is to ensure that different pro-peace actors work in a constructive way. In Colombia mobilised society was fragmented by the protracted war. Colombian activists have begun to address this challenge by developing **coalitions** of those committed to peace. Currently there are four major pro-peace coalitions, each with a different emphasis to their work. They have joined together to form the Committee Enlace, which provides a forum for representatives of these coalitions to shape a shared strategy so as to be effective in pushing their peace agendas at the national and international levels. In a number of places, peace advocates have been drawn from general pro-democracy movements in their country and thus are motivated by a generalised social change agenda. In the Philippines, civil society activists were

instrumental in the popular revolution that overthrew the Marcos dictatorship and in trying to promote national reconciliation. Later, some also played a role in trying to support peacemaking in Mindanao.

Northern Ireland: civil society peace promotion

In the early 1990s a group of non-sectarian activists, most with an NGO background, were disturbed by the lack of a serious peace process amidst general apathy. They created 'Initiative 92' a forum to discuss conflict issues that were otherwise raised in public discourse only by militants. They invited a Norwegian facilitator, Torkel Opsahl, to chair a seven person commission charged with holding public hearings throughout Northern Ireland. The findings were compiled in a book, which was the basis for a year of follow-up activities to animate public debate on the conflict and approaches to peace. Although the activities of the Commission ran parallel to the efforts that were simultaneously (and secretly) underway by the British and Irish governments to initiate negotiations, it helped to create a climate suitable for peace talks. They were later able to channel the ideas that emerged into the 1997-98 negotiations. Although the politicians effectively excluded them from the negotiation process, these activists wanted to support it. Therefore they organised public demonstrations and other activities to develop and give voice to the pro-peace constituency. They also worked at the 'grass top' level by organising a political dialogue within a four-way partnership between business, trade unions, farmers and NGOs to discuss substantive issues of shared concern. They funnelled ideas into the process and served as quiet intermediaries for communications between antagonist groups. Their efforts began to develop the social infrastructure for implementation and helped to create a public 'mood' supporting change that was vital during the referendum on the agreement that eventually emerged.

4. National peace conferences

National conferences are one of the main mechanisms used to enable public participation in political negotiations. They can provide the means for a broad cross-section of the public to make representations, formulate proposals, and – in some cases – make decisions on such crucial issues as constitutional changes or the contents of a peace agreement that envisions basic changes to the political or structural character of the state. Delegates are typically chosen on the basis of representing territorial, sectoral and / or political entities.

South Africa: the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA)

A series of national conferences paved the way toward the democratic transition. CODESA was intended to provide a platform for political interest groups to negotiate a political settlement and lay the foundations for a new constitution. CODESA became both a forum for 'talks about talks' and a *de facto* constitutional assembly. It shaped the political agenda by formulating a shared sense of where the diverse parties wanted to go and a plan for how to get there. It was open to groups that could demonstrate that they were organised and had a constituency. It involved representation from 27 organised groupings, including political parties, trade unions, and religious institutions. Delegates were chosen through a proportional representation list system. It was structured as a two-track process. One track was conducted as a classic negotiation between representatives to address the 'negotiable' issues (e.g., numerical composition of party representation in the cabinet). The second track was a planning process to create strategies for delivering on 'non-negotiables' (e.g., building a democratic society). Once broad thematic issues were identified – such as security, dealing with 'the past', or health and education – CODESA split into working groups. Each group brought together delegates from the different parties. The position of chair was rotated regularly between working group members, which helped to develop facilitation skills and diversified leadership roles. Each group was assigned a resource person who researched and advised on best practices deployed elsewhere in the world. The political negotiation track broke down periodically for strategic and tactical reasons with parties trying to gain leverage over each other. Yet delegates continued to return, in part because of their engagement in planning the non-negotiables. The process benefited greatly from both strong political leaders – who kept the long-term vision in mind, even when playing power politics on negotiable issues – and from excellent administrative and logistical leaders, who ensured that everyone remained informed and that the process ran smoothly. Although CODESA was eventually abandoned amidst escalating violence and the inability to reach an agreement on the transitional process, many of the ideas and principles developed through CODESA were picked up later in the Multi-party Negotiating Process that completed the negotiations.

5. Referenda and plebiscites

It is perhaps inevitable that only a small portion of the public can participate directly in negotiating and drafting a peace agreement. Holding a referendum (or 'plebiscite') is one of the devices used to gauge public support for agreements and to ensure its legitimacy by enabling a direct vote by the electorate on

whether they approve of the issues. Yet the way these polls are conducted can be of crucial importance, in part because the public has to understand the issues and agree to them.

In Northern Ireland, the public was asked to vote on whether to accept the agreement. It was assumed that this would basically be a procedure for 'rubber stamping' the agreement – after all, if the competing political parties agreed, wouldn't the public as well? Yet it was soon apparent that a huge chasm had opened between those who drafted the agreement and the population as a whole. In retrospect, it appears that the negotiators had been too blithe in assuming that the citizenry as a whole would be able to adapt to the speed of change. Although few objected to the core constitutional issues that were at the heart of the agreement, many were worried about such emotive issues as the release of prisoners. Non-partisan peace activists, concerned that the public would vote against the agreement, organised a 'Yes' campaign. Within six weeks, the majority of the population voted in favour of it and, in so doing, gave a massive impetus for political compromise and addressing the conflict through peaceful means.

In Guatemala, the voters rejected key constitutional amendments that were taken to the public in a referendum. The peace accords had no legal basis for reforming the constitution or state institutions. These were dependent on constitutional amendments to be approved through a referendum. It was initially anticipated that thirteen key issues (*compromisos*) would be taken to the electorate. Some parties argued that if the constitution would be amended to address these issues, then other concerns should be addressed as well. The eventual referendum required voters to respond with a simple yes or no vote to a package of 50 issues with no provision to treat each issue as a separate item. The design was highly confusing and many believe that from a technical-political point of view it lent itself to a 'no' outcome. The government did not undertake a public education campaign to inform the public about the proposed changes. Instead, the private media sector launched a campaign to promote a 'no' vote. In the end, the majority voted against the document as a whole, although majority supported the provisions for recognising the multicultural character of Guatemalan society. This was a major set back to incorporation of the agreement into the constitution and governing systems and was a source of bitter disappointment to many, who believe most conservative sectors manipulated the process to sabotage the agreement.

6. Government commissions and civic forums

Many were concerned that peace processes should result in a newly invigorated institutional framework to ensure the state's responsiveness to public interests and values. In some cases, mechanisms have been created to help promote the continuity of participation. Yet several participants revealed that these efforts have not done well so far. Many operate as a shell with little content or voice in the formal political process. According to one, it seems that the politician's prerogative of promoting their own parties and their own patronage opportunities prevails over strengthening the mechanisms for participation and ongoing civic capacities for political conflict management.

In some places, the mechanisms that enabled participation were abandoned at the end of the negotiation process. In South Africa, the National Peace Accord structures were shut down soon after the new power-sharing government came to office. In Guatemala, the Civil Society Assembly became a marginal voice and had no specified role in the implementation or monitoring of the agreements it had been so central in creating. In Northern Ireland, the Women's Coalition insisted that the new governing structures envisioned in the Belfast Agreement include a mechanism to enable the ongoing participation of organised civil society in governance. The other parties agreed to the creation of an advisory Civic Forum as a concession to this insistence. Yet thus far politicians have given it little serious political support and have seemed more concerned with promoting their political parties than civil society participation. In the Philippines, the experience at the national level has been somewhat more positive. The post-Marcos constitution envisions proactive civil society participation in governance and the achievement of social and economic rights. It has also set up Peace Panels with civil society representatives. They serve as technical support groups in the peace negotiations that successive governments have undertaken with various armed groups and, in some cases, review the texts of peace agreements. However the mechanisms to ensure the public accountability of these processes have not been put in place and there have been cases where the civil society representatives have resigned from the committee due to doubts about the seriousness with which their role is taken.

F. Fostering 'pragmatic peace' and engagement at multiple levels

Significant peacemaking work can take place in localities. The process of engaging local people can at times result in sustainable agreements to address popular concerns and help to transform social divides. Yet it can be difficult to translate these developments to the national level. Furthermore, deterioration in national processes can negatively influence these localised developments. In some cases, however, it

has been possible to develop a space at the local level for mass participation in peacemaking. In Colombia, REDEPAZ was formed as a national network of peace initiatives with focus on establishing local peace communities. In a context where civilian populations are frequently massacred, some localities have chosen to declare 'neutrality' and pro-actively resist the activities of both the armed revolutionaries and the right-wing paramilitaries. These communities are forming national networks of resistance to the war.

Mogotes, Colombia: activating local sovereignty for peace

In late 1987 the north-eastern town of Mogotes was occupied by one of the armed revolutionary groups, who held the mayor hostage. Residents met subsequently in small groups to analyse the problems encountered in their town. They identified poverty, violence and administrative corruption as the main issues. With church support, they decided to organise a **Municipal Constituent Assembly** comprised of 260 delegates, each of whom represented a small zone. The assembly developed a plan to address key issues and resulted in a greatly empowered citizenry. They first negotiated the release of the mayor, who was widely seen as corrupt. They then forced him to resign by applying concerted pressure based on non-violent direct action, such as silent marches, prayer vigils, and a popular referendum that revealed almost unanimous agreement that he must step down. They later developed a plan to promote integral development and improved public administration. They continue to hold local officials accountable for delivering on these priorities. They have also helped to create consensus for peaceful resolution of the war in a community that had been ideologically divided. The central government was initially suspicious of their activities, thinking them inspired by the guerrillas. Many activists were threatened by paramilitaries. Yet after the local bishop met with the president, he condoned their efforts. This enabled them to facilitate dialogue at a local level between the army, the insurgents, and local officials. Although the people of Mogotes have gone a long way towards promoting peace locally, they are still surrounded by armed groups and the government has not provided sufficient investment in the social capital of the community so as to address the underlying issues that generate conflict.

One of the participants from Mali pointed to the fact that peacemaking goes far beyond reaching a political agreement between the main parties. Their experience taught them the importance of establishing a 'pragmatic peace' between those who live side by side and have nowhere else to go. By involving people at a local level in developing strategies to tackle issues that were within their capacity to address, they were able to transform many of the factors that were generating conflict and were able to ensure a united front against those who used violence to promote their cause or position. Although the transition to democratic governance created the context for conflict transformation, it did not secure it. Before the authoritarian regime fell, the political opposition worked against the government's peace agreement with the armed groups because the insurgency weakened the regime. Peacebuilding in the north was greatly hindered by this problem. As one participant observed, it seemed that the main conflict was between the democratic reformists versus the anti-republican sectors of the army who were able to manipulate the conflict in the north. Yet once the peace process was fostered at the very local level, it became extremely difficult for the manipulation to continue to dominate when there was a broad popular consensus on how to address local issues that were the catalyst for conflict. This experience was echoed in South Africa, where they were able to deploy structures that sought to integrate people at all levels in peacebuilding in a process that complemented the formal political negotiations.

South Africa: the National Peace Accord

In South Africa, the political negotiations in the early 1990s risked collapse due to the rapid escalation to violence. Concerned by the humanitarian costs and fearful of what would happen if the political process failed, civil society organisations initiated a dialogue aimed at curbing the violence. Led by the church sector and the Consultative Business Movement with the support of the main political groupings, a preparatory summit was held in 1991 involving 120 people from 20 organisations. It was structured as a brainstorming exercise, asking participants to list the causes of political violence and ways to end it. The summit resulted in recommendations that laid the basic groundwork for what later became the National Peace Accord (NPA). Although some of the political parties on the far right and far left did not agree to the NPA, it was signed by 27 political, trade union and government leaders. Despite their ongoing and profound disagreements, it was a landmark in reaching agreement on a matter of common concern. To ensure that the NPA was implemented, structures were operationalised at the national, regional and local levels. The national level deployed a National Peace Committee (NPC) composed of representatives of the signatory parties who were charged with monitoring and ensuring compliance; a Secretariat charged with establishing and coordinating regional and local dispute resolution committees; and a Commission of Inquiry – known as the Goldstone Commission – to investigate the causes of political violence and suggest remedies. At the regional level, multi-sectoral peace committees were set up to advise the NPC on causes of violence and to settle disputes, as well as promote the implement the provisions of the

Accord. Similar committees were created at the local level. In addition to the regional and local committees, Special Criminal Courts were created at the regional level to deal with cases related to political unrest in a swift and effective manner. Justices of the Peace were appointed to investigate local cases, provide recommendations, and promote justice. The committees also assumed the role of peace monitors at public events and tried to prevent violence or, when it did occur, to inhibit it from triggering widespread unrest. Coordinators had to report the outcomes of their work to the parliament and political leaders, which helped to promote sensitivity to grassroots concerns. Many South Africans today believe that the NPA was crucial in transforming the way that conflict was addressed. It facilitated a shift from the use of violence and counter-violence to achieve political objectives towards openness to mediation-based approaches and helped to create a climate conducive to political negotiations.

G. Sustaining participation: social and political transformation

1. Protracted conflict

Several participants came from experiences of protracted conflict where peacemaking efforts have been unable to fundamentally address the issues and dynamics that generate and maintain violent conflict. In some of these, the formal peace processes have failed either to reach agreements or to generate the will to comply with them. This caused some to speculate that when promises are not kept, it can further entrench the conflict and create political and psychological barriers to further peace initiatives. Similarly, there was concern about the negative consequences of repeated consultation processes if they do not result in significant changes.

In the Philippines, the most widespread public participation initiative was the 1991 National Unification Commission. It involved broad consultations in all provinces on key issues that should shape the agenda for peace. Other consultations have occurred intermittently since that time, including the provision for public consultations jointly and / or separately on the draft agreement on socio-economic reforms currently being negotiated between the government and the National Democratic Front. One participant expressed the concern that these consultations have not resulted in substantial changes. Therefore many are becoming increasingly discouraged about the usefulness of these consultations and the sincerity of the government and combatant groups in responding to public concerns. Part of the challenge is that most of the conflict issues identified in these consultations are rooted in the structural constraints of the social and political systems. Because many of the basic socio-economic demands contravene the state's general approach to economic development, they are unlikely to be met. Therefore without fundamental reform of these systems, each consultation develops the same long list of unsatisfied aspirations. There is, however, a great need for sustained public participation in setting and pushing the agenda of popular concerns precisely because short-lived government administrations intent on pursuing their own priorities may lack the will to address the causes of these protracted conflicts. Yet the consultations should be – and should be seen as – a cumulative process that builds on the outcomes of the previous process, rather than merely a repetitive exercise that risks becoming little more than a cynical public relations exercise.

The peace process in Guatemala continues to suffer from the failure to effectively expand the process to engage the broad public, which meant that there was not a majority constituency to understand or support implementation and consolidation of the agreements reached. This has been exacerbated by the failure to reform the political party system that was itself partially responsible for the grievances that led to the conflict. The externally derived 'peace morals' were oriented toward reconsolidation of the state. Yet the state has been historically exclusionary in its institutional and political structure. The process inadequately addressed this fundamental problem. Instead it recreated the same structures that gave rise to conflict in the first place; the 'new' was essentially superimposed on top of the old, which is not transformed. Thus the old political culture remains in tact, the type of leadership is unchanged and there is no vision of a new type of power or leadership style. According to one participant, the consolidation stage has contributed to a re-fragmentation of organised civil society. It has undermined the political content of the agreement, so that "we now have peace without direction." The process has nevertheless helped to secure civil liberties that have enabled greater expression and participation and the fighting has ended. Over the long-term, these conditions may create the underpinnings for a more democratic society.

2. Sustainable peace

Participants concluded that peace is not just about the means; it is also about the ends achieved. An important factor is to 'civilianize' the political system and state institutions so that ordinary people are able to influence them and have a voice in governance decisions. Yet it was also pointed out that for peace to

be sustainable then people need to change, not just institutions and structures. According to one, those involved in peacemaking need to cultivate: “a dose of complicity and a dose of comprehension.” It can be important to ensure that peace agreements address the main substantive issues by spelling out both principles and policy objectives for a reconstruction and development plan. This can help to ensure that they are not ignored once the pressures of pragmatic governance begin and politicians begin to seek ways out from delivering on the ideals that were negotiated.

Participants were concerned with how to adapt a broad peace process to other issues, such as development. They saw the need for international support – including but not limited to financing – to address these challenges. Sometimes donors pledge to support post-conflict peacebuilding yet much of this financing never materialises. It was observed that when a country is at war, it attracts international attention; yet once there is a return to ‘ordinary’ poverty the country is largely left alone – even though it needs support to capitalise on the historic opportunity to address the underlying problems that led to war. One stated that ‘peace must be fed with people’ and rooted in all social layers. Social investment is crucial to sustainable peace and is one of the most challenging difficulties at a local level. This can demonstrate the usefulness of peace to a broader public when, in the initial period, fulfilling security and development aspirations is often elusive. Those who engage in violence to address conflict can be impatient. It can be highly frustrating when there is peace yet substantive changes do not occur. In these cases it can be difficult to prevent people from taking up arms again simply to sustain themselves in the interim period between reaching agreements and fulfilling the expectations. It may be necessary to re-emphasise that it is not possible to address root causes of conflict through the barrel of the gun. Thus it is when peace agreements have been reached that work on the underlying problems must begin.

It was observed that peace processes are typically unfinished and imperfect. There is usually a contest over interpreting the agreements reached and the consequent challenge that they will be understood and acted on in a manner that is enabling for society as a whole. Furthermore, conflict dynamics are not transformed by agreements alone – they also need a commitment to address ongoing problems through political means. It is possible that this challenge will be addressed more easily if most elements of the society have had an opportunity to engage in and take responsibility for the peace process.

V. Principles and ideas for supporting political participation

While the workshop was not designed primarily to generate recommendations, participants suggested the following principles and ideas for action:

1. To international agencies and governments interested in promoting peace
 - **Dialogue with civil society:** International actors should seek to engage with representatives of civil society and non-combatant groups to understand their perspectives on the conflict concerned and their strategies for ending it. They should seek input into the elements that should be included in the negotiation agenda and peacebuilding programmes. International actors should seek out representatives of social groups or sectors that are traditionally marginalised in the political life of the country and support their efforts to articulate their perspectives. Civil society involvement should be sought at the earliest stages so as to enable the wider process to go beyond ending the violence and address the broader goals of promoting human rights and development.
 - **Initiatives supporting public ownership:** International actors should be aware of the risk that their intervention efforts may displace local ownership of the process or shift the agenda from priorities articulated by civil society and the wider public. International initiatives should be designed to strengthen or complement mechanisms for public participation. Intervention and mediation processes should be assessed against how they address these concerns. International actors can use their leverage with governments and armed groups to encourage or sponsor processes that are socially and politically inclusive and increase both the transparency of the process and the accountability of those who negotiate the agreements. This can help to reinforce popular sovereignty and ensure that the mandate for the agreement rests within the public.
 - **Implementation and consolidation:** Priority should be given to support the speedy implementation of peace agreements through appropriate financial, technical and political support. The substantive content of these agreements should be the guide for prioritising international funds channelled into post-conflict reconstruction. Special emphasis should be given to social investment so that those who have suffered from the war can begin to experience the material benefits of peace.

2. To civil society peacemakers

- **Shaping the agenda.** Representatives of organised civil society can be proactive in articulating, developing and proposing substantive agendas to address underlying causes and sustaining dynamics of conflict and processes and to shape the political content of the agreement.
- **Capacity building.** There is a need to prepare people as well as processes. Emphasis should be given to developing the skills and capacities of all those who would like to participate in the political peace processes. Efforts should be made to ensure that these initiatives reach ever wider and more diverse audiences – including those in traditionally marginalised positions.
- **International advocacy.** Efforts should be made to communicate directly with international actors – especially intermediaries, influential governments, ‘experts’ and donors – to inform them of public concerns and develop their commitment to support public participation.

3. For process design

- **Process mechanisms.** Be aware of the implications for outcomes on how processes operate – and in particular how they may be vulnerable to being sabotaged. Consultations that do not result in change can entrench cynicism and despair. Take steps to mobilise and engage diverse public voices at every developmental phase of the peace process, from preparation to negotiation to implementation and consolidation. The principle aim is to broaden the base of ownership of the process and to consolidate it into a sustainable peace based on ongoing participation.
- **Multi-sectoral processes.** It is important to develop mechanisms capable of engaging diverse – and often competing or contradictory – perspectives and aspirations. Multi-sectoral initiatives may help to achieve this objective. Care is needed to ensure that mechanisms enable the effective and equal participation of representatives of marginalised sectors of society.
- **Mass participation.** Recognise that organised civil society may not have deep roots with mass constituencies. It may be necessary to mobilise broad public involvement through processes that enable direct consultation and communication.
- **Communication strategies.** Part of enabling public engagement is conveying information and ideas about the process and about the issues being addressed. Take communication strategies seriously and try to develop public information campaigns and events that resonate with cultural symbols and practice. Consider organising political fora that address a broader social or economic dimension that connects with people’s day-to-day concerns.
- **Local engagement.** There may be opportunities to engage in highly effective processes within local communities to develop a ‘pragmatic peace’ between those who must live together. This can be powerful for developing pro-peace constituencies, particularly if efforts are made to interlink local initiatives with national processes through coalitions and or other mechanisms to channel outcomes into national debates.
- **Implementing agreements.** Ensure the binding nature of the agreements and develop clear parameters for post-agreement consolidation. Cultivate the sustained financial, technical, and political support needed to consolidate the process. Envision and support the development of mechanisms to ensure the continuity of participation in governing institutions.
- **Comparative learning.** Valuable insights can be drawn from past experiences with mechanisms for political participation of the public in peacemaking. Opportunities for comparative learning should be supported through documenting experiences and reflecting on them. Practitioners can form informal networks to exchange ideas and information and offer mutual support.

VI. Participants List

In addition to those listed below, five participants from Guatemala, Northern Ireland, Somalia and Sri Lanka were regrettably prevented from attending the workshop.

Fernando Hernandez	REDEPAZ	Colombia
Jorge Rojas Rodriguez	CODHES PAZ COLOMBIA	Colombia
Mons. Luis Gomez Serna	Catholic church	Colombia
Tania Palencia Prado	Independent Researcher	Guatemala
Zeidan Ag Sidalamine	Adviser to President	Mali
Ibrahim Ag Youssof	Consultant	Mali
Kåre Lode	Centre for Intercultural Communication	Norway
Quintin Oliver	Stratagem NI	Northern Ireland
Rufa Cagoco-Guiam	Mindanao State University	Philippines
Miriam Coronel Ferrer	Third World Studies Centre	Philippines
Karen Tañada	Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute	Philippines
Mohamed-Abdi Mohamed	Somali Peaceline	Somalia
Eldred de Klerk	Graduate School of Public & Development Management	South Africa
Chris Spies	Dynamic Stability CC	South Africa
K Sithampanathan	Theatre Action Group and University of Jaffna	Sri Lanka
Ven Batapola Nanda Thero	Movement for the Defence of Democratic Rights	Sri Lanka
Catherine Barnes	Consultant and Conciliation Resources	United Kingdom
Andy Carl	Conciliation Resources	United Kingdom
Ed Garcia	International Alert	United Kingdom
Celia McKeon	Conciliation Resources	United Kingdom
Nathalie Wlodarczyk	Conciliation Resources	United Kingdom