Introduction

Navigating inclusion in peace processes
Andy Carl

There is a broad global consensus that inclusion matters in peace processes. The 2018 UN and World Bank report, *Pathways for Peace*, asserts that ‘addressing inequalities and exclusion’ and ‘making institutions more inclusive’ are key to preventing violent conflict. The challenges now are to strengthen that consensus and to better understand what inclusion in peace processes means in practice. These have been the questions explored in the Political Settlements Research Programme (PSRP), which this publication is part of (see inset below).

Seventeen years ago, Conciliation Resources published Catherine Barnes’ ground-breaking *Accord* on public participation in peacemaking, *Owning the Process*. Since then there have been multiple milestones in negotiating peace accords with varying levels of commitment to inclusion, in the Philippines (Mindanao), Nepal, South Sudan and Colombia. UN Security Council resolutions 1325, 2419 and 2282 and the Sustainable Development Goals chart the emergence of a new global consensus that women, young people and society more broadly have essential roles to play in negotiating, implementing and sustaining peace, and in preventing conflict from descending into violence.

While the ‘inclusion consensus’ has been growing, new challenges to implementing it have been evolving with equal vigour. Negative trends in violent conflict have been reversing development gains, exacerbating suffering and fuelling displacement crises. Drivers of conflict have escalated and evolved, including fragmentation of military and political power, weak and corrupt governance and state institutions, climate shocks, rapid mutation of conflict causes and means of violence, geopolitical rifts that fuel a proliferation of weapons, and military interventions. Authoritarian governments have shrunk space for civil society mobilisation. International relations are in a state of strategic confusion, with little scope for agreement among global powers on ways to tackle instability – and how or even whether to uphold the rule of law.

Structure of the publication

In addressing some of the practical challenges of navigating inclusion in peace processes, this publication is structured around three areas of enquiry:

1. Frameworks for understanding inclusion in peace processes
2. Inclusion in practice in national peace processes – with ‘deep dive’ case studies of Colombia and Nepal
3. Inclusion in practice in sub- and supra-national peace processes – with case studies on Turkey, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria and Afghanistan

Section 1) Frameworks for understanding inclusion in peace processes

In the first section, authors introduce an essential vocabulary of concepts with which to navigate the challenges, dilemmas and opportunities for inclusive peace.

Christine Bell opens the section by situating the publication as part of a new ‘inclusion project’ in global policy circles, which sees inclusion as an essential goal in building peace. But different actors have different perspectives as to why inclusion is important. Development actors see it as essential to long-term poverty reduction. Peacebuilders understand it as a requirement for processes to address root causes of armed conflict. Human rights promoters advocate forms of group inclusion as integral to a commitment to equality. Bell further explains that within the inclusion project there are also three subsidiary projects which are in tension with one
another: efforts between conflict parties to forge a new pact to end violence; efforts by wider society to create a broader social contract; and the involvement of international actors connected to the conflict in a range of (often contradictory) ways, pursuing their own goals and interests. The fact that these various inclusion projects play out in different arenas – formal and informal, and internal and external – further complicates the inclusion challenge.

Jan Pospisil outlines the idea of the ‘formalised political unsettlement’, which he has developed along with Christine Bell. This describes how peace processes commonly result in situations whereby the conflict is not resolved, but rather is contained in reconfigured post-agreement political and legal institutions. This challenges linear approaches which assume that particular interventions will inevitably lead to particular outcomes. Formalised political unsettlement analysis helps to better understand the parameters of what is and is not possible in peace agreements and inclusive processes, and to pinpoint potential entry-points for more transformative change.

John Paul Lederach explores the core question of how people in conflict environments participate meaningfully in decisions that influence their lives. People affected by ‘deep and sustained harm’ need to feel ‘valued, visible and acknowledged’. Lederach explains that the dominant peacebuilding metaphors conceal as much as they reveal – not least the negotiating ‘table’, which epitomises elite bargaining and decision-making. Conventional peace approaches have consistently failed to enhance inclusion, especially for local communities, and space to do things differently is closed down. More substantive inclusion requires ‘engaging the public imagination’ through people’s perceptions of the quality of process and the character of leadership, and moving to processes more akin to social networking.

Sophia Close, Catherine O’Rourke and Zahbia Yousuf introduce the idea of ‘gendering political settlements’ – paying attention to gender in relation to how power is administered, and to how it influences institutions and the distribution of resources. The authors recognise that the challenges of gender inequality are rarely fully addressed in peace processes. A commitment to equality and shared values is often missing from renegotiated political and legal institutions, and so the historic exclusion of particular identity groups is perpetuated, especially of women. Transforming gender norms takes time, and the authors stress that more support needs to be given to local actions, which are best placed to respond to the complex and interconnected dimensions of exclusion in all its forms.

Sean Molloy and Borja Paladini, drawing on recent experiences with the Barometer Initiative in Colombia, show how more inclusive monitoring mechanisms can open up the implementation of a peace process to a range of new, previously marginalised actors. They suggest that the sustainability of an agreement refers to the degree to which it is implemented, which means translating commitments into norms, institutions, policies and concrete actions – a long, uncertain and complex process. The peace agreement does not transform war economies, nor does violence necessarily reduce immediately. Political actors change and power-holders evolve. Unresolved and sometimes new conflicts emerge. Corruption and weak institutions remain. Divided communities, resistance to change and mistrust permeate the implementation environment.

Cedric de Coning explores how complexity thinking can contribute to our understanding of how to create more inclusive peace processes, and how adaptive approaches enable local and external peacebuilders to apply new models of practice, experimentation and learning. These differ fundamentally from approaches where the role of peacebuilders is to implement a pre-designed intervention. De Coning suggests that pressure for change tends to accumulate over time often without signs of progress,
and that key system changes occur during periods of turbulence when the self-sustaining ‘path dependencies of violence’ are disrupted. Adaptation does not imply embracing disorder or abandoning goals, but rather being front-footed, coping with uncertainty, anticipating change and embracing experimentation.

Jenny Aulin’s article draws on a recent consultation with over 170 local and international peacebuilding practitioners and academics, which asked ‘what is inclusion in peacebuilding?’ Findings suggest seeing inclusion three-dimensionally, as: 1) inclusive representation – who participates? 2) inclusive process – how do mechanisms to support inclusion work? and 3) inclusive outcomes – what are the results for excluded groups? Aulin explains that how people self-organise, claim access and hold powerful actors to account is integral to any peace process. Inclusive outcomes are ‘as much a culture as a contract’ – emphasising greater tolerance, social cohesion and prevention of violence. Recognising and working with the diversity of civil society is key to meaningful inclusive change.

Graeme Simpson’s article draws on his experience as the lead author of the report on youth, peace and security mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015). Simpson challenges what he calls the ‘policy panic’, which erroneously associates youth with the threat of violence, and fails to recognise that the vast majority of young people reject the use of force. He stresses that, unlike other demographic groups, youth identity is inherently transitional and is constantly being outgrown, which requires strategies to manage such change. Young people refuse to be co-opted into corrupt or partisan processes or political systems, and complain that the prevailing discourses of inclusion ignore how they are ‘setting their own tables and forging alternative spaces for engagement’.

Section 2) Inclusion in practice in national peace processes
The second section of the publication explores how more inclusive representation, processes and outcomes have been attempted in two peace processes – in Colombia and Nepal, where social, political and economic marginalisation lay at the roots of both armed conflicts. The Colombia and Nepal studies in this publication were coordinated respectively by Kristian Herbolzheimer and Deepak Thapa.

Colombia
Introducing the Colombia study, Herbolzheimer provides a succinct summary of the peace process, explaining how it has developed new mechanisms for participation. He describes how the conflict parties drew an explicit distinction between initial peace negotiations between themselves, with a limited agenda aimed primarily at ending the violence; and a broader social and political peace process, which would take place following the signing of a peace agreement ‘with the participation of each and every one’. Herbolzheimer identifies specific inclusion innovations in the process: inviting the private and security sectors into the government’s negotiating panel; public conferences and consultations prior to the formal peace talks, convened jointly by the UN and the National University; inviting victims to the peace talks; and responding to the demands of ethnic minorities. He explores the unexpected setback from the national referendum and some of the current challenges with agreement implementation and public participation.

Former High Commissioner for Peace in Colombia, Sergio Jaramillo, describes how peace is ‘all about inclusion’ in Colombia. He says a peace process seeks to transform the logic of confrontation into one of collaboration, working under the assumption that there can be win-win solutions, where winning does not mean defeating your adversary. He introduces their idea of diálogos improbables (improbable dialogues) that bring together people who had been deeply affected by conflict in very different ways. Jaramillo explores several of the more innovative mechanisms of inclusion in the talks and the current implementation process, including the concept of paz territorial (territorial peace), which refers to the ambitious rural development programmes that are based on very detailed participatory planning processes.

Helga Flamtermesky, Dorys Ardila and Javier Churry explore the challenges of promoting participation for Colombian citizens living abroad. They explain that while there is a consensus regarding the need to place victims at the centre of the peace process, diaspora populations face a dual challenge to seek inclusion in societies of both their host country and their country of origin. They see their participation in the peace process as ‘not only a right, but also an act of reparation’.

Members of the National Coordination of Indigenous Women in Colombia [CONAMIC] describe how indigenous people have been disproportionately affected by the armed conflict and remain vulnerable to violence today. They explain that their main challenge has been to be included as indigenous women in male-dominated decision-making spaces, both within their own communities and at the national level. They are now working to socialise elements of the agreement, crossing cultural and international borders, and making new alliances between indigenous and non-indigenous women.
Nepal

Deepak Thapa explores the extraordinary changes brought about through the peace process in Nepal – ending a conflict rooted in the exclusion of more than 70 per cent of the population. His narrative begins with the end of the Maoist insurgency, following the success of the ‘People’s Movement’ and the formal signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2006. He outlines how in Nepal’s peace process, inclusion has been used to refer both to ‘inclusive governance’ through, for example, granting citizenship papers to people previously deprived of them and declaring Nepal a secular and federal state; and building an ‘inclusive society’ – to ensure equality of opportunity and representation for all Nepalis. The ‘principle of inclusion’ developed into the principle of ‘proportional inclusion’ in the context of constitution-building, which implied quotas for social groups and delineating parliamentary constituencies primarily on the basis of population. Despite this focus at the centre of Nepal’s peace process, realising societal inclusion has proved complicated, in part because there was no consensus about what exactly this would mean in practice.

In assessing the relationship between inclusion and the peace process, Thapa concludes that increases in political representation for marginalised interest groups are likely to prevent significant violence in Nepal for the time being. But there is a high probability that incumbent elites will continue to try to reverse inclusive gains – forgetting that inequality and exclusion were sources of grievance and conflict in the past and can be again in the future.

In conversation with Thapa, Minendra Rijal, MP, one of the architects of the mixed electoral system in Nepal to promote social and gender diversity, asserts that at the end of the war, the Nepali state allowed the Maoist leaders to largely determine the content of the peace agreement so they could convince their cadres to engage with the process. Since then, violence has ended and there is broad political consensus on many major issues – so looking back, the compromises seem worth it. Rijal describes how efforts to promote inclusion can backfire, how quotas have primarily benefitted elites among marginalised communities, and that there has been too little focus on other forms of social empowerment through education and training: ‘it is easy to change anything politically, but it will take long time to change it socially’.

Thapa also spoke to well-known Nepali author Manjushree Thapa. She explains how recent progress on federalism and provisions for inclusion at all levels of government has suddenly opened up political space to new constituencies. But this has left a ‘capacity-gap’ as new appointees lack relevant experience. She stresses that the first Constituent Assembly was the most ‘intelligent body of governance Nepal has ever had because it was so inclusive’. The potential is there in the new local and provincial governments, but needs more support.
Section 3] Inclusion in practice in sub- and supra-national peace processes

The third and final section comprises four case studies that explore international and sub-national dimensions of navigating inclusion in peace processes.

Judith Verweijen looks at Mai-Mai armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and how their limited inclusion in the country’s peace processes has contributed to their fragmentation and ultimate proliferation. She provides a compelling example of how the disparate and diverse groups and individuals that comprise the Mai-Mai based in the east were included as an ‘umbrella category’ in a national peace process, and that this fostered both internal power competition within the Mai-Mai and ‘a sense of marginalisation’ from the central process, with profound consequences for the sustainability of the peace agreement. Verweijen stresses that the difficult transition that followed reveals how the agreement failed to consolidate peace and has in fact led to remobilisation which continues to this day.

Esra Çuhadar’s article looks at peace efforts over the last decade to resolve the conflict between the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). She introduces the language of a ‘resolution process’ – coined by Ankara to mitigate tensions between a wide process towards a comprehensive political settlement, and a narrower process to facilitate transition out of violence. Çuhadar explores the mismatches of expectations among the conflict parties and the communities affected by the fighting, and how the way in which the peace agenda is framed can facilitate or undermine consensus among the diversity of interests involved. But the breakdown of the resolution process also highlights the risks of too much ‘constructive ambiguity’ – and the failure to address the ‘radical disagreement’ at the heart of the conflict, or even to concur what that is.

Marie-Joëlle Zahar and Sara Helmüller explore challenges of civil society inclusion in peace efforts in Syria. Armed conflict in Syria is multi-layered, involving a multiplicity of national actors and of regional and geopolitical interests. International narratives have exaggerated external actors’ influence, underplaying local agency and diversity. Syrian civil society has been labelled as either close to government or close to the opposition, with Damascus branding further ‘opposition’ civil society as terrorists. Recent UN mediation efforts have tried to break this mould, for example through the Civil Society Support Room (CSSR) – an independent platform of Syrian civil society actors that came together to influence the political process. But while civil society may have helped to broaden intra-Syrian talks, they have not reconciled fundamental splits among the conflict parties and can risk sending misleading messages of progress and legitimacy.

Finally, Michael Semple examines how international engagement has affected inclusion in peacemaking in Afghanistan. He looks at four peace initiatives with varying levels of ‘inclusion ambition’ – the Geneva process, the establishment of the Taliban office in Qatar, and the Peshawar and Bonn processes. The analysis stresses the potential of sequencing the peacemaking agenda to enable participation of warring parties to achieve agreement on controlling violence, leading to subsequent negotiation processes to address governance, institutions and the social contract. Semple stresses that the history of peacemaking in Afghanistan shows that sustained and broad international engagement is vital to support greater inclusion, but that international peacemakers may be better served by promoting local consensus rather than a particular political configuration.

The publication closes with a summary of key findings and conclusions. It is a rich volume, and probably one best consumed in bite-size pieces, but those seeking insights and inspiration for what we need to think about when we think about inclusive peace, and what it means in practice, will find it nourishing food for thought.

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