



# Using gender to promote inclusion in peace transitions

## Guidance from practice

Peace transitions provide opportunities to enhance the inclusion of women and other excluded groups. Inclusion is critical for peace and stability. Evidence from practice-based research conducted by Conciliation Resources suggests that donors operating in peace transition contexts can do more to put gender at the heart of their programmes, and in particular:

1. **Identify the different challenges and opportunities for meaningful participation faced by disaggregated categories of women and other excluded groups.** Use an intersectional approach, which recognises that exclusion and inclusion are determined by many factors that affect a person's identity, including their gender.
2. **Help people from excluded groups take full advantage of inclusion opportunities so they can influence outcomes.** Provide sustained and adaptive support to help women and other excluded groups leverage their participation, so they are able to change the outcomes of peace processes in which they take part.
3. **Support local activists to apply and adapt international frameworks in their own context.** Promote the 'domestication' of international frameworks by national and local champions, to develop contextually meaningful goals and strategies they can use in advocacy.

Women, men, and gender and sexual minorities<sup>1</sup> from different social groups have a right to participate meaningfully in decisions which affect them and broader society. Broader inclusion also makes communities and societies more peaceful and stable, offering more equal opportunities for those who live within them.<sup>2</sup> This is reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>3</sup> and the UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS).<sup>4</sup> It is also widely taken up in donor policies, for example *UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2018–2022*,<sup>5</sup> and the EU's *Comprehensive approach to the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 & 1820 on women, peace and security*.<sup>6</sup>

Enhancing inclusion in practice is challenging, for a number of reasons. Peace transitions offer opportunities for new dynamics of inclusion, especially in less formal or sub-national processes.<sup>7,8</sup> But these situations are not predetermined and pre-existing attitudes towards gender roles and behaviours in society are resilient.<sup>9</sup> The leaders with whom elite bargains are struck to stabilise transitional situations are usually powerful men, and pushing for broader inclusion of others, including women, young people or gender and sexual minorities, is sometimes considered to be counter-productive to stabilisation.

The pathways to the meaningful participation of excluded groups are neither straightforward nor predictable. Gender norms are deeply embedded in culture, faith, the economy and politics, so changes are often resisted and any pushback can harm those whom reforms are intended to help. Donors may have limited influence over these norms, and where they do, may lack the contextual expertise to go beyond solutions, such as women's representation, to a deeper shift in gender roles and relations. So how can donors overcome these challenges?

This guidance is drawn from Conciliation Resources' work in political transitions for over two decades, in particular the practice-based research conducted in 2016–17 with our partners in Colombia, Nepal and Bougainville.<sup>10</sup> It also builds on broader guidance published simultaneously by Conciliation Resources: *'Smart inclusion' in transitions from war to peace*.<sup>11</sup> This concludes that donors should set goals for increased inclusion right from the start of their work in post-conflict situations, and adopt a 'smart inclusion' approach, taking advantage of opportunities to broaden the inclusion of different groups as they arise. It also suggests they emphasise inclusion in informal and sub-national processes, and that they use their influence as donors to advocate for increased inclusion in processes over which they may have influence. Here, we set out three ways in which they can bring a gender dimension to this work.

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## 1. Identify the different challenges and opportunities for meaningful participation faced by disaggregated categories of women and other excluded groups.

Use an intersectional approach, which recognises that exclusion and inclusion are determined by many factors that affect a person's identity, including their gender.

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A major finding of the research is the importance of intersectionality as a lens of analysis for policy, programming and monitoring. Recognising this allows a far more precise analysis of the potential pathways for reducing the exclusion of people from specific groups, and can help determine which groups are losing out, and why. Intersectionality is the idea that all people are affected by multiple, interconnected identity factors, and therefore access power differently and may be

subject to multiple, interacting forms of discrimination.<sup>12</sup> For example, a woman's identity in Colombia interacts with her age, class, religion, geographical location, ability, ethnicity, sexuality and other factors, all of which may lessen or increase the degree to which she is included in or excluded from peace processes and outcomes. Intersectionality also applies to gender and sexual minorities, and men.

1. In this report we have chosen to use the term 'gender and sexual minorities' to refer to the wider group who may not be encompassed by the acronym 'LGBTQI+' (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex).

2. United Nations & World Bank. *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* (2018); Department for International Development. *Building Stability Framework* (2017); Department for International Development, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, & Ministry of Defence. *UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace & Security 2018 – 2022* (2018).

3. United Nations. *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015).

4. UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015) and 2331 (2016).

5. Department for International Development, Foreign and Commonwealth Office & Ministry of Defence (2018), op. cit.

6. Council of the European Union. *Comprehensive approach to the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 & 1820 on women, peace and security* (2008).

7. Bell, Christine & Jan Pospisil. 'Navigating Inclusion in Transitions from Conflict: The Formalised Political Unsettling', *Journal of International Development*, Vol. 29 No. 5: (2017); 576–593

8. Yousuf, Zahbia. *Navigating inclusion in peace transitions: beyond elite bargains*. (London: Conciliation Resources, 2018)

9. O'Rourke, Catherine. 'Gendering Political Settlements: Challenges And Opportunities', *Journal of International Development*. Vol. 29 No.5 (2017): 594–612.

10. Yousuf, Zahbia op. cit. Close, Sophia. *Gendered political settlements: examining peace transitions in Bougainville, Nepal and Colombia*. (London: Conciliation Resources, 2018).

11. Conciliation Resources. *'Smart inclusion' in transitions from war to peace. Guidance from practice* (2018)

12. Conciliation Resources. *Gender and conflict analysis toolkit for peacebuilders* (2015).

## Indigenous women face tensions between two advocacy goals

Indigenous women engaging in the peace process in Colombia faced a particular challenge that illustrates how intersectionality affects inclusive change. They were simultaneously advocating for the right to participate in political decisions as individual Colombian women, and for the collective rights of indigenous peoples – societies in which many women face high levels of discrimination and the risk of violence. Their embrace of women’s rights led to tensions within their communities and accusations that they were undermining and dividing the wider movement for indigenous recognition. Any support provided to them, or to indigenous groups more broadly, must take account and be based on an understanding of these intersecting challenges.

The challenge of intersectionality is also illustrated in Bougainville, where the majority of high-profile women leaders gain their positions when they are endorsed by older, male community and religious leaders. Other women who are younger, less educated, hold lower customary status, are poorer or from more remote geographic locations can find it more difficult to participate in decision-making or access leadership roles at all levels of society. This exemplifies the problem of treating all ‘women’ similarly and the need for more precise analysis and targeting.

In another example of the importance of intersectional analysis, elite Nepalese women tended to dominate women’s voices in the Constituent Assembly, with

limited participation of less privileged women. Although there are seats reserved for women, and for low caste women in national government and local village councils in Nepal, these positions tend to be determined by male party leaders who allocate them to women of similar status, thus diluting the impact on diversity. Hence, attempts to maximise diverse participation should focus not only on those who are *de jure* excluded. Efforts should also target those who remain excluded despite legal guarantees. Intersectionality provides a helpful lens in doing so.

Our research also supported the importance of identifying opportunities for greater inclusion of different groups from an early stage in the transition, so their perspectives and needs are taken into account, and they internalise and develop the confidence and capacity to make a difference. This requires early and participatory gender-sensitive conflict analysis. Donors therefore need to:

- Ensure staff have sufficient capacity to understand intersectionality and draw on relevant analytical tools available – for example, Conciliation Resources’ *Gender and Conflict Analysis Toolkit*.<sup>13</sup>
- Undertake this participatory analysis jointly with local actors to help recognise the different opportunities and obstacles affecting different groups, and provide tailored support accordingly.
- Deploy targeted and contextualised programming and political support to overcome the different opportunities and obstacles affecting different groups, based on the intersectional analysis.
- Disaggregate groups when monitoring inclusion and adjust strategies accordingly.

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## 2. Help people take full advantage of inclusion opportunities so they can influence outcomes. Provide sustained and adaptive support to help women and other excluded groups leverage their participation, so they are able to change the outcomes of peace processes in which they take part.

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Increased participation does not automatically result in a proportionate level of influence. While gender roles may change during conflict and peace processes, and political transition after violence often results in more participation of women or other excluded groups, this is not always sustained, nor does it necessarily enable them to influence important decisions and directions.

Our research found that although women are often excluded from formal decision-making, they often stepped into activist roles during times of crisis, and that these roles could be influential, at least in the short term. In all of our research contexts, space has opened for more diverse representation of different groups of women (indigenous, ethnic minorities, young women) and also in some cases for gender and sexual minorities.

13. Conciliation Resources (2015). *op. cit.*

## Turning men's and women's participation into collaborative influence

Many were surprised when the legislature in Bougainville passed a new Community Government Act, mandating gender parity in local government seats. This creates an opportunity to support men and women at community level, embedding a voice for women in local governance even as their customary role in some areas of decision-making declines, and to explore collaborative approaches to decision-making between women and men in formal local government structures.

In Bougainville, during a decade of violent upheaval, women helped persuade men to disarm and demobilise, and bring the conflict to an end in 1998. Remarkable advances have been achieved by activists for LGBTIQ rights in Nepal, resulting in constitutional recognition of non-binary gender identities – including the availability of a 'third gender' citizen option and recognition of sexual and gender diversity in the school curriculum. Seats are now reserved for women in parliaments and local councils in Bougainville and Nepal. Colombian women, including indigenous and Afro-Colombian women, and sexual and gender minority activists, advocated successfully for gender and ethnic issues to be emphasised in the peace agreement between the government and the FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*).

Our evidence shows that despite greater participation of women and other excluded groups, hard-to-change gender norms were not being transformed; indeed, that as the situation stabilised, past expectations and behaviours reasserted themselves. In all the contexts we researched, men – particularly older, elite men – continued to dominate many national and local decisions. In some cases, having women represented did not ensure that gender issues were addressed, even when these issues had been acknowledged.

For example, the need for justice in respect to sexual violence in Nepal and Colombia remains unmet, despite the formal recognition that sexual violence against women was widespread in both contexts. The final constitutional negotiations in Nepal ended up being decided among higher status men, despite 30% of the Constituent Assembly seats being held by women. And although assembly or council seats

in Bougainville and Nepal are reserved for women, many people there view the non-quota seats as "reserved for men", suggesting that fundamental attitudes to gender roles remain unchanged. The 2015 Constitution rescinded an earlier commitment that Nepalese mothers could transmit citizenship to their children – a regressive step in gender terms as well as a potential cause of conflict in the future. This change affects the rights of the Madhesi ethnic group in particular whose geographic location means that many marry non-Nepali citizens. This was a setback for the Madhesi community – and arguably for all Nepalese – and illustrates that gendered issues are not just "women's issues".

The resilience of traditional gender norms is partly explained by the fact that much important decision-making still takes place in informal settings and institutions, which remain male-dominated. Not only are these institutions resistant to improved gender equality, in some cases they provide opportunities for inequality to become even more entrenched. So for example, in Bougainville even customary roles that women have long held have begun to erode, as new processes for decision-making tied to a more monetised economy overtake traditions. Whereas women, as custodians of land, had in the past been involved in land negotiations, such discussions are now more likely to be conducted only by men.

Donors need to provide flexible and sustained support to women and other excluded groups to convert new opportunities for participation into influence on issues about which they care strongly. They can:

- Set targets and strategies for the inclusion of women and other excluded groups in formal and informal processes *from the start*.
- Guide those participating in unfamiliar processes – for example, through leadership training, analytical and tactical advice, collaborative planning and learning, and solidarity – and link activists from different transitional contexts, for mutual support and learning.
- Support locally-led research to identify opportunities, based on disaggregated data from women and other excluded groups and share the findings with local and international partners.
- Back efforts to engage with informal, customary and faith systems, and with those who have power, to facilitate changes in attitudes and gender roles and relations, because of the influence they hold.

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### 3. Support local activists to apply and adapt international frameworks to their context. Promote the ‘domestication’ of international frameworks by national and local champions, to develop contextually meaningful goals and strategies they can use in advocacy.

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Activists in all three research contexts used international standards like UNSCR 1325 and subsequent Women, Peace and Security resolutions, which emphasise the meaningful participation of women and girls in peace transitions.<sup>14</sup> These, along with other relevant frameworks such as the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, are the normative frameworks that underpin intersectionality. As such, they are seen by local activists as adding legitimacy to their own efforts to change prevailing norms, and they also serve as a tool with which international organisations can legitimately collaborate with and support activists.

These WPS frameworks have been used to create National Action Plans in many countries, including Nepal and Bougainville, but in most contexts these have so far been limited in reach and impact. To overcome this problem, Colombian groups have used the generic WPS framework in local consultations to identify contextually relevant strategies and indicators for prevention, protection and participation (the key pillars of WPS), thus ‘domesticating’ and bringing to life the international framework as something which they can promote and monitor, rather than

simply adopting the international wording. This contextualising process has great potential to be used elsewhere, to reinforce the institutionalisation of inclusion into governmental and other national and sub-national frameworks, and to address not just women’s meaningful participation but the need to modify gender and identity roles more widely, including the roles and masculine identities of men.

Sometimes, international frameworks have been introduced in ways considered restrictive and disrespectful of local cultures. This happened in Bougainville, where some local activists felt their efforts to promote women’s inclusion had been undermined by international initiatives poorly tailored to the context. In Nepal and Colombia, some people have claimed that inclusion is an ‘alien’ or ‘Western’ ideology, using this as convenient argument to dismiss or resist the issue.

The term ‘gender’ is often understood to mean ‘women’, which can exclude the vital role of men and boys in transforming gender roles and behaviours. With this in mind, our research also reinforced the importance of engaging with influential men and key institutions, for example religious and cultural institutions, to build support for change within society.

#### Domesticating international frameworks

The eight UN Security Council Resolutions which together comprise what is known as the Women, Peace and Security framework represent the organic development of international agreements about the protection and participation of women, and the prevention of violence towards them, over more than fifteen years. As such, the WPS framework validates local and national efforts, and provides local and international organisations alike with a legitimate framework for their activism.

Yet it is couched in language which can seem unwieldy, alien and abstract. Two organisations in Colombia – CIASE (*Corporación de Investigación y Acción Social y Económica*) and CONAMIC (*Coordinación Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas de Colombia*) – collaborated to ‘localise’ the framework to reflect the daily lives of indigenous women. Using participatory methods they created indicators for indigenous women to use, making the global framework relevant to their local context. Examples of indicators include: *how many women participate in autonomous governance structures in indigenous reserves?* and *how many indigenous women are visible in the national media?* By this process of ‘domestication’ they have not only created a practical framework for highly relevant local action, but also reminded indigenous women that they are part of a global movement, enhancing their confidence and sense of legitimacy.

14. UN Security Council Resolutions, op. cit., & UN Security Council 2250 (2015).

Emphasising the prevention and protection pillars of WPS are also critical to achieving meaningful participation. The resistance to gender inclusion can sometimes be violent: Colombia and Nepal both provided examples of vested interests using violence to restore the gender and political status quo.

Therefore donors should:

- Identify and support champions (individuals or organisations) who can use international frameworks to create locally adapted strategies and indicators for use by civil society in advocacy, and government in policy-making.
- Conduct joint exercises to map local activists and social movements, using an intersectional lens, thus allowing the targeting of support and collaboration where it is most helpful.
- Engage influential men at all levels of society in change processes.
- Offer them flexible, sustained funding, training, and exposure to external initiatives and knowledge to enhance networking and collaboration and build capacity among activists.
- Support justice and security initiatives which increase the safety of women and gender and sexual minority activists.

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Cover photo: The launch of the National Coordination of Indigenous Women in Colombia (CONAMIC) in June 2017. CONAMIC is network of women from 10 different indigenous groups across Colombia. © Conciliation Resources.

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