

GENDER BRIEFING SERIES

'SECURING' PEACE:
WOMEN AND SECURITY
ARRANGEMENTS IN PEACE
PROCESSES



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THE PURPOSE OF THE GENDER BRIEFING SERIES

This brief is part of a Gender Briefing Series to support women's meaningful participation and the integration of gender perspectives in peace processes that aim to end violent intra-state conflict.

The key target audience is women, gender equality advocates and others engaged in peace processes, who wish to influence negotiations with a view to: (a) addressing the particular experiences of women during conflict, and (b) achieving lasting peace process outcomes that will improve women's lives and the lives of those around them.

Using a comparative approach, the briefs:

- Establish the importance of the issue from a gender equality perspective and the importance of women's meaningful engagement for effectively addressing it.
- Identify key issues with reference to the inclusion of women and their gender-related and gender-specific dimensions.
- Suggest ways of influencing change in peace processes, including identifying possible entry points and overcoming tensions with competing strategies.
- Highlight through examples how integrating gender perspectives in peace agreements not only benefits women, but also helps diversify perspectives and proposed solutions, thereby contributing more generally to progress in peace processes for all.
- Provide quantitative and qualitative data from peace agreements, using examples from across the world as evidence and inspiration for action.

- Offer analysis that provides for principled approaches to inclusion – grounded in international legal standards – with an indication of how these can be linked to pragmatic political arguments.

Too often, formal peace negotiations approach women's meaningful participation and gender equality as a secondary and apolitical concern to 'stopping the war'. Arguments are often made that the need for political pragmatism to end the conflict must singularly prevail. Yet both concerns are inextricably linked to one another for sustainable peace. The approach of these briefs supports engagement in peace processes rooted in the principle of gender equality, while recognizing that provisions designed to achieve equality in any context will be negotiated politically in practice. To influence change, women will need to influence a range of actors, including those who may not see gender equality as central. Women themselves will also have diverse political views and perspectives. The briefs therefore offer comparative analysis, examples and framing questions to support women and others to develop proposals suitable to their own context, rather than prescribing any one approach.

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INTRODUCTION

Armed conflict, first and foremost, creates a challenge for personal safety and physical security. Other forms of security are also threatened, such as socio-economic security or legal security. Peace processes and the agreements they produce engage with a wide array of security issues, at all stages of the peace process. This brief will focus primarily on **physical security** – future references to security will mean physical security, although discussion will also touch on how physical security relates to other forms of security.

Security arrangements vary in scope and nature. They may include disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration; reform of the national security architecture, including defence or police sector reforms; and the protection of civilians or internally displaced persons, amongst other agreed issues.

(Source: United Nations, 2017. [Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies](#))

Security is a key concern in negotiating peace, and a central focus of peace negotiations and peace processes. About 85 per cent of all peace agreements from 1990-2016, include stipulations that address issues of physical security (see [PA-X Peace Agreements Database](#)). The remaining 15 per cent are mainly partial agreements on specific matters to which security provisions are not relevant. Virtually all comprehensive peace agreements deal with security, as do all cease-fire agreements.

Security is a highly gendered concept. Violence during armed conflict often affects women and men differently. Security provisions in peace agreements tend to focus on security in relation to armed actors that are primarily men, and often fail to take into account women's experiences of insecurity during conflict, and the security needs they expect and require the peace process to deliver. **It is therefore important to highlight the particular security challenges for women at all stages of peace negotiations and peace processes.**

Security is particularly important for women to address in peace negotiations because it affects all aspects of their lives. Unless and until physical security can be guaranteed, other forms of security are very difficult to achieve, as are any broader gender equality outcomes or other improvements to women's lives. Women also bring insight and knowledge about the insecurities faced by women, which are useful to addressing practical issues of security more generally.

PART I: OVERVIEW

What do we mean by security?

Security is both a difficult and important matter to resolve for all parties to the conflict. High-level negotiators often understand their key role to be to reconcile the demands of armed actors in the conflict. Where these demands are perceived to be in tension with the claims of other groups, including women, negotiators will often adopt a ‘first stop the fighting’ approach focused on agreement between military actors, with other issues to be dealt with subsequently.

Security in the context of peace negotiations is typically exclusively understood as ‘hard security’. Hard security concerns include movement of troops or armed combatants, ceasefire lines, territorial control, weapons control or processes of demobilisation and disarmament of combatants, and more structural security sector reform (SSR) (such as reforming army, police, and their lines of democratic accountability). **Yet, a key element of delivering security involves addressing the physical safety of all non-combatants affected by armed violence, and this requires a much wider process.**

To be effective in having their demands heard and to influence the process, it is important for women to develop:

- a women-centred articulation of security needs;
- ideas about how these could be prioritized and delivered over time;
- an understanding of how the parties to the conflict will approach their security needs, and where there will be synergies and tensions with civilian and gender priorities;
- an identification of avenues of influence (the talks, the international supporters of the talks, wider civic engagement); and
- practical strategies of engagement across multiple forums and actors.

Using international norms: The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda

It is internationally acknowledged that security has a gendered dimension. This aspect of security is of particular concern in the context of violent conflict, where male-dominated groups of combatants often deliberately target civilians as a tool of warfare, including through gender-based violence. The international community has recognized this problem with a set of resolutions that have been passed by the United Nations Security Council, notably: UN Security Council resolution 1325 and the so-called ‘Women, Peace and Security (WPS)’ agenda, and General Recommendation 30 to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Due to its high-level international recognition, the WPS agenda offers an important reference point – and thus practical leverage – for women in any negotiation related to security and violent conflict. UN Security Council resolution 1325 in 2000 set out a clear agenda on women, peace and security and has been followed by more than a dozen further resolutions dealing with the WPS agenda. The following table provides an overview of the respective resolutions and their content which can be used as a means of leverage for the participation of women in peace negotiations along matters of security:

TABLE 1: UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS DEALING WITH WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

31 OCTOBER 2000 S/RES/1325	This was the first resolution on women, peace and security, expressing the Council's willingness to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping missions, calling on all parties to protect women and girls from gender-based violence and to put an end to impunity for such crimes.	The resolution urges to ' <i>ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict</i> '.
13 NOVEMBER 2000 S/RES/1327	This resolution emphasized the importance of the Secretary-General in conflict prevention and reaffirmed the role of women in conflict prevention, and resolution and peacebuilding. The Council also agreed to strengthen the system of consultations with troop contributing countries (TCCs) through the holding of private meetings with them and stated a possibility to consider using the Military Staff Committee as one of the means of enhancing UN peacekeeping capacity.	The resolution ' <i>fully endorses the urgent need to mainstream a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations</i> '.
30 AUGUST 2001 S/RES/1366	This resolution addressed the issue of DDR in UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding mandates. It stated that preventing armed conflict was a major part of the Council's work.	The resolution ' <i>requests the Secretary-General to give greater attention to gender perspectives in the implementation of peacekeeping and peace-building mandates as well as in conflict prevention efforts</i> '.
19 JUNE 2008 S/ RES/1820	This resolution addressed sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations and asked the Secretary-General for a report by 30 June 2009 with information on the systematic use of sexual violence in conflict areas and proposals for strategies to minimize the prevalence of such acts with benchmarks for measuring progress.	The resolution affirms ' <i>that effective steps to prevent and respond to such acts of sexual violence can significantly contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security</i> '.
30 SEPTEMBER 2009 S/RES/1888	This resolution strengthened efforts to end sexual violence against women and children in armed conflict.	Subsequent to S/RES/1820, the resolution ' <i>affirms in this regard that effective steps to prevent and respond to such acts of sexual violence can significantly contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security</i> '.
5 OCTOBER 2009 S/RES/1889	This resolution urged Member States, UN bodies, donors and civil society to ensure that women's participation, protection and empowerment is taken into account during post-conflict needs assessment and planning.	The resolution ' <i>urges Member States, international and regional organisations to take further measures to improve women's participation during all stages of peace processes, particularly in conflict resolution, post-conflict planning and peacebuilding, including by enhancing their engagement in political and economic decision-making at early stages of recovery processes, through inter alia promoting women's leadership and capacity to engage in aid management and planning, supporting women's organizations, and countering negative societal attitudes about women's capacity to participate equally</i> '.

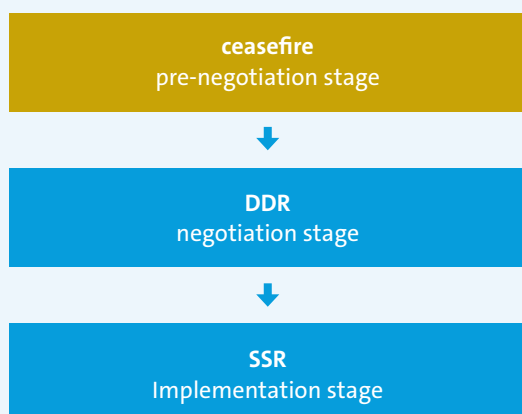
16 DECEMBER 2010 S/RES/1960	This resolution established a monitoring, analysis and reporting mechanism on conflict-related sexual violence in situations on the Council's agenda. It also called upon parties to armed conflict to make specific, time-bound commitments to prohibit and punish sexual violence and asked the Secretary-General to monitor those commitments.	The resolution affirms <i>'that effective steps to prevent and respond to such acts of sexual violence can significantly contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security'</i> .
24 JUNE 2013 S/RES/2106	This was a resolution focusing on accountability for perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict and stressing women's political and economic empowerment.	The resolution <i>'stresses women's participation as essential to any prevention and protection response' in relation to sexual violence and systematic attack against civilian populations.</i>
18 OCTOBER 2013 S/RES/2122	This resolution addressed the persistent gaps in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, as highlighted in the most recent Secretary-General's report.	The resolution <i>'intends to focus more attention on women's leadership and participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, including by monitoring progress in implementation, and addressing challenges linked to the lack and quality of information and analysis on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peacebuilding and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution'</i> .
28 APRIL 2014 S/RES/2151	This resolution was the first ever stand-alone resolution on security sector reform. It emphasizes the centrality of national ownership for security sector reform processes and encourages States to take the lead in defining an inclusive national vision on security sector reform, informed by the needs of their populations, and in particular women.	The resolution <i>'underscores the importance of women's equal and effective participation and full involvement in all stages of the security sector reform process, given their vital role in the prevention and resolution of conflict and peacebuilding, and in strengthening civilian protection measures in security services, including the provision of adequate training for security personnel, the inclusion of more women in the security sector, and effective vetting processes in order to exclude perpetrators of sexual violence from the security sector'</i> .
13 OCTOBER 2015 S/RES/2242	This was a resolution that addressed women's roles in countering violent extremism and terrorism, improving the Council's own working methods in relation to women, peace and security and taking up gender recommendations made by the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, and the Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.	The resolution urges <i>'donor countries to provide financial and technical assistance to women involved in peace processes, including training in mediation, advocacy, and technical areas of negotiation, as well as providing support and training to mediators and technical teams on the impact of women's participation and strategies for women's effective inclusion'</i> .
20 DECEMBER 2016 S/RES/2331	This was the first-ever resolution on human trafficking, which condemned the phenomenon and stressed how human trafficking can exacerbate conflict and foster insecurity.	The resolution encourages Member States to <i>'build strong partnerships with the private sector and civil society, including local women organizations, and to redouble their efforts by encouraging these actors to provide information helping to identify, disrupt, dismantle and bring to justice individuals and networks involved in trafficking in persons in areas affected by armed conflict'</i> .

PART II: GENDER, WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND SECURITY IN PEACE PROCESSES—WHAT TO ADDRESS?

In broad terms, peace processes aim to establish ceasefires often through preliminary talks, which enable parties to move to substantive talks on how to bring the conflict to a more permanent end. Bringing the conflict to a more permanent end involves dealing more structurally with security issues, including both ‘military’ matters such as disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) of combatants, and ‘political’ matters such as bringing national armies under democratic control, or establishing a rule of law framework, including, for example human rights protections. Diagram 1 shows the key building blocks of security, in an idealized sequence.

DIAGRAM 1

Idealized Security Trajectory of Negotiations



Examination of what peace agreements deliver at different stages of a peace process, indicates that **there are no real patterns to which types of issues get addressed at each stage, suggesting that a range of security matters are often addressed at each stage of a peace process.** Security priorities at each stage will always depend on the respective patterns of the negotiations and their context.

For example, ceasefires in general may tend to focus on the separation of forces and on providing and monitoring an actual ceasefire – which at first glance may not seem vital to the future security structures in the country. However, in some ceasefire processes a surprisingly wide array of further matters is debated as shown by the example of the ceasefire between the Government of Burundi and the Palipehutu. Importantly, security procedures agreed at an early stage often determine how the issue is dealt with later on.

[FNL/Burundi, Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Burundi and the Palipehutu, 7 September 2006.](#)

Article II:

1. Ceasefire Agreement shall imply:

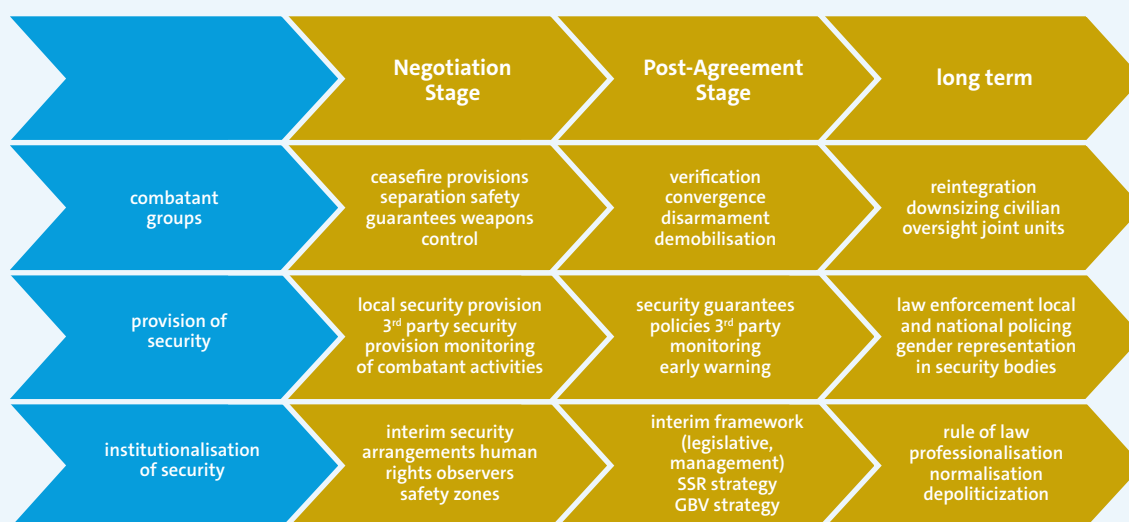
1.1.5 Cessation of all acts of violence against the civilian population: acts of vengeance; summary executions; torture; harassment; detention and persecution of civilians on the basis of ethnic origin; religious beliefs; and or political affiliation; arming of civilians; use of child soldiers; sexual violence; sponsoring or promotion of terrorist or genocide “ideologies”.

Addressing the gendered dimensions of violence and security is critical, especially in the immediate post-conflict phase. Questions around ceasefire observation, civilian protection, policing, issues of relief and reconstruction, land reform, as well as elements such as domestic violence, all may need to be addressed in any substantial peace deal.

Diagram 2 gives an overview of what issues are commonly discussed and addressed at the different stages of a peace process, based on a review of all available peace agreements from 1990 to 2016. Women’s concerns have a role to play at all levels, and in all stages of the negotiations. ‘End the conflict first’ approaches to mediation may view gender concerns as less important than those of armed actors, and therefore better suited to longer-term security agendas. **However, there are key immediate security concerns which are dealt with at an early stage of the process – in particular, when ceasefires are agreed – which are of particular importance to women. These especially include the protection of civilians, and strategies against gender-based violence (GBV), which need to be on ceasefire violation lists if they are to be monitored.** Both of these matters also have considerable traction among international stakeholders who promote international legal obligations through human rights and humanitarian standards – both bodies of law require these issues to be addressed. **International supporters can help to leverage access to negotiations to enable these concerns to be heard.**

DIAGRAM 2

Measures/Instruments to be Implemented in Different Peace Process Stages



The following four issues of substance and strategy commonly reoccur in peace processes, especially in relation to the inclusion of women and a gender perspective in agreements. It is highly likely that the first two issues of substance will be touched upon when negotiating, and they therefore offer potential key entry points for women. Strong preparation and negotiating strategies in relation to these issues can be important to ensure a broader concept of gender inclusion in peace negotiations.

Negotiating matters of personal safety and physical security

The concern of personal safety is crucial at each phase of a peace process. As mentioned above, issues of civilian safety are often addressed throughout a conflict. During a peace process, **they should be addressed as early as possible** in the pre-negotiation period or while negotiating ceasefires. At these early stages, women can bring any documentation or analysis of patterns of conflict experienced by women to the table. It can also be useful to **try to change the language around security issues** in peace processes, to move from the question of how to resolve issues between armed forces, towards the broader question of how to 'keep people safe' in practice, which can touch a wider range of security issues.

Ceasefire agreements often list, in a very detailed way, the 'do's and don'ts' of how the armed actors are to treat each other. However, they often neglect the broader security threats these armed actors can pose for others – even when demobilizing. These threats can be direct, such as sexual violence perpetrated by combatants. They can also be indirect because they open up a security vacuum, which is then exploited by other violent actors (such as criminal gangs or violent extremist groups); or because impunity for sexual violence is heightened when large populations of armed men are confined to particular areas, towns and villages, after ceasefire lines are drawn.

The safety of the affected population must be a key concern in the substantive negotiations. Here, women can provide particularly informed analysis of the connections and interlinkages between physical and socio-economic security, and the ways in which they should be addressed together. For example, routes to water and food supplies, basic healthcare

and schooling, are issues often linked to the safety of access routes, and these should be addressed together.

In the longer term, evidence from post-conflict regions shows that violent conflict is intrinsically linked to **domestic violence patterns** in the aftermath of war (as shown in Herbert, 2014). It is important to highlight this issue when discussing comprehensive peace deals, and to look for sustainable, context-sensitive approaches on how to handle GBV: from psychosocial support, to integrating former combatants into appropriate structures in everyday policing or community-based reintegration programmes, as in the recent agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP (see box below).

[Colombia, Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace, 24 November 2016.](#)

Article 3.4.1. Guiding principles

Gender-based approach: special emphasis will be placed on the protection of women, children and adolescents, who have been affected by the criminal organizations that are the subject of this agreement. This approach will take account of the specific risks faced by women against their life, freedom, integrity and safety and will be appropriate for those risks.

Engaging with security sector reform (SSR)

Security Sector Reform (SSR) deals with all matters of how army, police and the wider security apparatus will be rearranged after violent conflict. This is necessary since armed actors in a country at war are, most commonly, primarily prepared to fight the war. Armed forces under such circumstances are often less concerned with guaranteeing the safety and security of citizens, than with winning the war (although they often articulate the desire to win the war in terms of the need to protect civilians). In addition, the post-conflict period is often fluid and characterized by recurring periods of fighting and violence. **The common acknowledgement of the need to restructure a security apparatus after war provides another important entry point for women's concerns.**

Three matters are of considerable relevance to security: the question of civilian oversight; the participation of women in the actual security apparatus (security sector and democratic oversight bodies); and safeguards put in place to ensure that security provision addresses women's concerns. From a women's perspective, it is important that SSR be based on an inclusive process, that ensures women's participation, and addresses gender considerations more broadly (for detailed advice and toolkits on SSR and gender, see Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces publications in Appendix B).

Guarantees that safeguard the representation and inclusion of women in both oversight structures and the security apparatus can have important results as the example of South Africa shows. However, such guarantees cannot just address the safety concerns of women in post-conflict situations; they must aim at changing the culture and actual behaviour of security forces.

Two approaches to SSR are important to consider:

A. The first approach is to push for strong representative civilian and democratic oversight of armed forces and police. This should include women in oversight, for example in government positions relating to security, parliamentary committees overseeing and controlling the security apparatus, or national security committees. Women's civil society organizations can also participate in community-based policing and security initiatives at the national and local level as examples from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Libya illustrate.

Democratic Republic of Congo, Inter-Congolese Negotiations: The Final Act ('The Sun City Agreement'), 2 April 2003.

Article 3.b Families, Women, Children and Vulnerable Persons

iv. Reinforce the identity of women concentrating on equality and complementarity with regard to their effective integration in all vital areas of national life: this concerns the thorough application of the quota or percentage allocated to women in the effective participation in all decision-making sectors of national life (The quota is equivalent to at least 30%, according to the Declaration of the SADC countries, ratified by the DRC).

Security committees can also be established at the local level, which may give them even greater traction in handling issues of personal safety of particularly vulnerable parts of the population (see box on Mali). An inclusive approach in these committees – in particular, inclusive of women – is a key ingredient for making their work successful. National peace agreements often contemplate the establishment of local security structures.

Libya, Libyan Political Agreement (Sukhairat Agreement), 17 December 2015.

Article 37

1. The Government of National Accord, immediately after gaining the vote of confidence of the House of Representatives, shall establish and chair the "Committee for Monitoring the Implementation of the Interim Security Arrangements" as agreed. The Committee shall establish sub-committees and other supporting mechanisms as may be required, taking into consideration the representation of local communities, including men and women, in such mechanisms. The Committee shall submit its periodical reports to the Government of National Accord. Until the Committee has been formed, the Security Track of the Libyan Political Dialogue shall determine suitable mechanisms to implement the security arrangements.

Mali, Accord Pour la Paix et la Reconciliation au Mali – Issu de Processus d'Alger, 20 June 2015.

Annex 2: Defence and Security

V. Reform of the defence and security sector

c. Establishment of Local Consultative Security Committees (Comités Consultatifs de Sécurité, CCLS)

- Within 60 days of signing the Agreement, CCLS shall be established by decree, first at the regional level, and then at the communal level (one CCLS for each region based in the regional capital, and one CCLS in each commune).

- CCLS shall include the stakeholders in justice and security at the local level, including representatives of the new territorial police, of communities and traditional authorities, and members of civil society including associations for women and young people. CCLS shall provide advice and recommendations at the level of the local executive and to security stakeholders, and shall assist with information exchange, awareness-raising and taking greater account of the concerns of the population.
- CCLS shall meet at least once a month to evaluate the security situation and to make recommendations.

Women's representation in security committees should not be limited to the post-conflict period. Examples from peace processes show that inclusiveness is often also considered necessary for monitoring committees during ceasefires, which are typically built to include proportional members from the different 'sides' in the conflict. In contrast, gender inclusion provisions can be vague (see Myanmar example). Ideally, clear provision for the inclusion of women should be made that ensures women's equal and effective representation (see UNSC Resolution 1541, Paragraph 19; on Myanmar ceasefire negotiations and inclusion of women see further Barsa, Holt-Ivry & Muehlenbeck, 2016).

[Myanmar, Joint Monitoring Committee guideline for Each Level, 15 October 2015.](#)

Chapter 4, State Level Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee (JMC-S) Formation

34. The JMC-S shall be formed by the JMC-U as the following:

(E) Both parties shall do their best to include the participation of women in the JMC-S.

B. The second approach is to consider where and how women are included in security forces – both in rank and file membership, and within leadership and oversight structures. Achieving a gender-balanced leadership and membership in a nation's security apparatus is a long-term task and not one that has proved

easy anywhere in the world. Still, it can be important to articulate that ideally, security forces should 'look like the population they seek to serve' in terms of race, ethnicity, and gender. Requiring that security forces are representative of women is an area that is rarely addressed by peace agreements, although, in contrast, they do often provide for 'military power-sharing' to ensure that membership and command of police and armies is representative of the main groups and forces at the heart of the conflict.

How to use international leverage

Peace negotiations tend to be exclusive affairs – focusing on those mainly responsible for the conflict. For reasons such as confidentiality and a sense of risk, the parties to the conflict are often reluctant to accept broader participation. Yet, for women, having a clear voice in the 'hard' part of the negotiations is a key precondition for dealing with all matters of security. Here, international partners and the international legal framework can add significant leverage to women's attempts to engage in the process. International organizations, such as the United Nations, and regional organizations such as the African Union, can offer useful support. So too can international civil society organizations, whose importance in peace negotiations has significantly increased in recent years.

In the context of international leverage, the WPS agenda has an especially important role to play. UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions not only provide a general framework that legitimizes and demands stronger participation of women, they can also be used to lobby for gender representation in security structures.

[Uganda, Agreement on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, Juba, Sudan, 29 February 2008.](#)

Article 2.14

The Parties shall ensure that the DDR process fully incorporates the special rights and needs of women. In particular, Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000) and clauses 10 and 11 of the Agreement on Accountability and Reconciliation shall be observed.

It may prove helpful to team up with international organizations as a negotiation strategy, particularly since such organizations subscribe to international agendas such as WPS, and have skills and resources in this area. For example, the African Union High-Level Panel on Darfur (African Union, 2009), deliberately acted as a gateway for many concerns, including those of women, that were commonly neglected by the lead negotiators of the conflict parties.

Managing trade-offs and tensions

Negotiating security in peace processes is a challenging process with numerous tensions and trade-offs at play. By the very process of laying down arms and agreeing to external oversight, the leaders of non-state armed groups take an enormous risk with respect to their capacity to ‘win the war’. This tension tends to turn many security issues that appear technical into highly contested ones. As a result, design of new security protections will often involve significant trade-offs if the competing positions of the main combatants are to be accommodated. To be effective, women leaders have to adopt multi-layered forms of advocacy that:

- recognize and support the need to get to a ‘deal’ so that the parties stop fighting, as central to any attempt to provide security;
- push that deal to be realistic in terms of what it will actually take to ensure that women are more secure in practice, for example – by including sexual violence as a ceasefire violation, or setting up accountability mechanisms for any reformed armed forces;
- try to ensure that women are involved in all the processes for establishing security – ceasefire monitoring bodies; commissions to consider reform of police and army or lead disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes. These bodies will be where security ‘deals’ continue to be worked out in practice and will be responsible for creating and shaping a wider social discussion on security; and
- use each stage of a peace process to ensure that gains for gender equality are made in terms of democratic accountability, and the composition of leadership and rank and file of the security forces.

These tasks cannot all be managed simultaneously, and inevitably there will be tensions between these different goals at different stages of the process. **Ultimately,**

decisions as to how to advance women’s security concerns can only really be made in context, since a key challenge in changing security environments is often knowing when and how to introduce arguments, and what to push for and prioritize at what stage.

The following discussion of ‘trade-offs’ points to some strategies that have been effective. These are essentially political strategies for intensely political processes, which nonetheless try to ensure a principled approach to the inclusion of women, their security needs and priorities: what we term ‘**principled pragmatism**’.

‘Principled pragmatism’ is an approach which can involve constantly highlighting the gendered character of violence and security, while at the same time avoiding categorical normative demands that will be considered by the parties and international mediators to be serious deal-breakers in peace talks.

The ‘comprehensive’ versus ‘deal’ security trade-off

In recent years, there has been a considerable broadening of how security is understood. From a rather narrow paradigm that describes mainly ‘hard’ measures of security provision, newer concepts such as ‘human security’ (generally defined as the ‘freedom from want and the freedom from fear’) have essentially redefined many broader issues as connected to ‘security’. How then should matters of security be approached in peace negotiations? For example, are matters of inclusive development or wealth distribution aspects of security to be considered?

There is a tactical trade-off between narrow and broad language relating to the framing of security issues that women and gender equality advocates can use in approaching security debates. **At early stages of talks, where the security focus is on a ceasefire, it may be useful to point to the broad range of security terms, interlinkages between socio-economic security and physical security, and the broader gendered dimensions of security, to challenge, reframe and broaden the narrow agenda of the armed actors.** This may be important to signal that the conflict is not something that can be ‘solved’ by a narrow security deal (necessary as that may be as a starting point), but will

need to address root causes of conflict, and provide a broader political solution that enables buy-in from more elements of society.

At later stages of talks, where difficult and more technical issues of police and army make-up and reform are on the negotiating table, using a very general security language or trying to insert a broader set of issues into this discussion may be ineffective. Instead, **being prepared with concrete suggestions that can help ‘solve’ the problems of both the parties and the mediators can increase credibility and influence.** For example, providing researched detailed proposals as to the representation of women on bodies deciding reform agendas, or for female quotas in armed forces, or making effective and realistic proposals that would ensure the democratisation and accountability of armed forces in the future.

Importantly, to deliver security in practice, numerous difficult decisions will need to be made as regards when security debates need to be broadened and deepened and reframed; and when detailed proposals should be fashioned to feed into discussions the main parties to the conflict are having with each other. **It is therefore important when strategizing to influence peace negotiations, to determine what key demands of the process should be framed in security terms, and what aspects should not.** While it is possible to frame all kinds of social issues as matters of security, decisions as to what to push in the negotiations and how to reframe the language around security, need to be made in light of how best to influence the discussions as structured by the peace negotiations.

The accountability trade-off

The question of accountability for those responsible for serious international war crimes, including sexual violence, has potential to prevent any substantial peace agreement when approached from a dogmatic normative stance at an early stage in the process. As with matters of human rights and accountability more generally, women’s concern to achieve accountability needs to consider trade-offs that arise from the security guarantees armed actors are likely to demand in exchange for their readiness to lay down arms (see further, Gender Briefing Series: Transitional Justice and Peace Negotiations with a Gender Lens). One way to handle this tension is to understand each stage of

agreement as part of a broader process in which different forms of accountability will be possible at different stages, while also recognizing that future stages of the process will not be reached unless a ceasefire can be sustained and deepened into a broader social contract.

Although straightforward demands for prosecution and punishment are likely to be viewed as a matter that would derail talks, it is still important that there are clear voices articulating the wrongs of the conflict and the need to redress them. **However, to be effective from ‘the inside’ of peace negotiations, women need to find the right language with which to articulate the longer-term need for accountability without it being dismissed by parties and mediators because it seems unachievable in the short-term.**

We know from a range of peace processes that different forms of accountability are possible at different stages of a peace process, and in the implementation phase. With accountability as the end goal, as the process unfolds it may be necessary to build towards this goal by:

- trying to prevent outright commitments to permanent blanket impunity;
- inserting language such as ‘non-repetition’ or even the need for ‘a just peace’ which will keep the issue of justice on the peace process table; and
- building mechanisms which will help establish truth and a measure of accountability.

These strategies will need to be accompanied by exerting influence and pressure outside of the talks process with a range of local and international actors. Recognising inherent difficulties of providing for accountability and finding new ways of tackling them will also be critical. For instance, the question of how to reconcile accountability for gross human rights violations, with the need for ‘non-repetition’ that a permanent end to the conflict can deliver, is a very difficult one. It is also difficult to create discussions about the conflict that will enable a divided society to talk about the past – especially when different people have suffered great wrongs at the hands of the ‘other side’ – in ways that offer people possibilities for living together peacefully rather than reigniting conflict and division. Women and gender equality advocates, through organising deliberative forums on the past, can play an important role in helping bring new ideas and creative solutions to the formal talks process.

PART III: ENTRY POINTS TO SECURITY DEBATES

Approaches rooted in ‘principled pragmatism’

Language around security is an important tool in seeking to influence peace talks. Reframing security issues and tensions in creative ways can be a successful strategy for inclusion of women and gender-sensitive approaches, as well as helpful to the talks process as a whole in reshaping polarised debates to make it easier for the parties to find compromise. For example, in Northern Ireland, when ‘the police’ were discussed, this was a very divisive issue in which Unionists/Protestants and Nationalist/Catholics largely took completely opposite positions. Unionists asserted that the police did not need reform at all, while Nationalists wanted to see the police force completely disbanded and replaced as ‘unreformable’. When the debate was reframed as a discussion over ‘principles for policing’ however, this became a way of reaching at least a level of outline agreement on what the police service should ideally look like.

[Ireland/UK/Northern Ireland, The Agreement Reached in the Multi-Party Negotiations \(Good Friday Agreement or Belfast Agreement\), 10 April 1998, Policing and Justice: Paragraph 2.](#)

The participants believe it essential that policing structures and arrangements are such that the police service is professional, effective and efficient, fair and impartial, free from partisan political control; accountable, both under the law for its actions and to the community it serves; representative of the society it polices, and operates within a coherent and operative criminal justice system, which conforms with human rights norms.

Importantly, phrases such as ‘representative of the society it polices’ opened up the reform process not just to equality between divided Unionist-Protestant/Nationalist-Catholic groups, but to inclusion of women.

Moving to agree on principles for policing then made it clear that the main talks process could only establish these principles and was not the appropriate forum in which to try to turn them into an actual reform plan. A specialist commission (the Patten Commission) was therefore established by the Agreement to consult and advise on how to implement these principles in a

project of police reform. Two women were appointed to the seven-person Commission, and consultations meant that the process of police reform became a much broader, society-wide process than the peace talks could ever have delivered.

Using the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda

As highlighted above, the WPS Agenda and its UN Security Council resolutions (of which the most important is UNSCR 1325) offer a promising tool for highlighting and addressing the gendered aspects of security in peace negotiations. **Yet, there is also a danger that the WPS Agenda is seen as a tick-box exercise that needs to be seen to be addressed, and then merely assigned to WPS experts.** The downside of this approach is that instead of being an integral part of the negotiations with real traction on what the parties are deciding, women’s issues become compartmentalized and side-lined. It is important to assert that a gender perspective is what international standards require as part and parcel of the entire process. Additionally, it is important to also strategize politically, in terms of practical consideration, how to reframe security issues in ways (a) that are useful to the parties’ reaching a sustainable agreement; and (b) that ensure that the agreement better responds to the security priorities of women.

Dealing with evidence and policy mantras

An increasing evidence base suggests that peace agreements have better outcomes if women are included in peace negotiations. **To increase women's engagement and participation, it's important to recognise however, that different types of evidence will be better suited to influence different participants in a peace process.** For instance, international mediators may be persuaded by statistics as to how the inclusion of women improves process outcomes (or not). Local powerful political and military actors will often be influenced by arguments addressing security concerns raised by women and other gender equality advocates that help them achieve something that they consider valuable, such as:

- a more workable ceasefire that will not be used by the other side to gain victory;
- a confidence-building 'win' that will help them 'sell' any concessions they have made in the process to their base; or
- good relationships with important international allies.

Evidence of 'facts' and legal or policy mantras will only have traction in specific moments and with particular audiences, and is likely to have little traction with armed actors. Similarly, persuading those involved in peace negotiations that appropriate forms of security should be delivered, will often require persuading them that these forms of security are important to stabilizing the situation more generally.

Instrumentalization of women in security debates

Sometimes issues of women's security will be used 'instrumentally' in peace negotiations. For example, women will be included as people who will play a role as 'ethnic reconcilers', or 'front-line' resisters of violent extremism in local communities and even their own family or addressed only as 'victims' of security breakdown. While women do often bring these perspectives to peace processes and are sometimes given access to processes because they are understood to do so, limiting women's participation in security discussions to this role plays into a very 'essentialized' view of women as just peacemakers and victims in the conflict. This can side-line them from the hard, technical and very political discussions of how security issues

should be addressed. Increasingly, security agendas are also undertaken using the language of 'anti-terrorism' and 'countering violent extremism', with treatment of women used as a justification for specific laws or strategies. Yet, when a threat is understood to be an existential terrorist threat, the chance of women's rights getting lost in an anti-terrorism strategy is high, even when it is undertaken citing protection of women as a key justification.

Where to find further inspiration and knowledge

Building strategic alliances

Security is relevant for all stakeholders in a peace process. Identifying potential allies who have shared concerns can support and catalyse women's advocacy. Paradoxically, combatant groups and militaries themselves, due to the very nature of their undertaking, have a level of expertise in how to restrain forces and deliver forms of immediate security. Looking at their demands and practices may prove useful. Non-aligned minorities often have particular security needs and may also feel marginalized by the focus of security debates. Discussing potential common ground amongst groups whose interests are excluded by the process, and identifying mutual interests, can help to build leverage into a high-level mediation or negotiation process.

Learning from comparative processes

As the number of references in peace agreements clearly show, security is a key concern in all peace processes: around 85 per cent of all peace agreements explicitly address security concerns. There is a lot to learn from the experiences of others. Making contacts and building relationships with women's groups in other peace processes can be helpful when thinking of how to engage in negotiations, since engagement is not just about content but also about tactics.

Similarly, looking at other peace processes and how women's issues in the broader area of security have been dealt with by other peace agreements can offer important insights. Drawing on comparative peace agreement practice is not a matter of directly copying what has been done before, but rather, a matter of using examples to inspire political imagination and stimulate ideas of how to deal with contested issues in a creative way.

A number of databases and collections of peace agreements provide easy access to peace agreement texts. In three key databases, agreement provisions can be easily searched. These are the **PA-X Peace Agreements Database** (www.peaceagreements.org), the **Language of Peace Tool** (<https://www.languageofpeace.org/#/>), and the **PAM Peace Agreement Matrix** (<https://peaceaccords.nd.edu/>). These can be used to explore how women's participation in peace processes, in particular in the sector of personal safety and wider security, has been handled in peace processes throughout the world.

Carefully using international partnerships

International actors are often closely engaged with security issues in peace processes, and also espouse international standards and norms, especially around the WPS agenda. They can offer financial support, or helpful advice and training. Yet, partnering with international actors requires care and needs to reflect the national political context, perhaps in the

area of security more than any other given its highly political nature. International actors have their own (not necessarily bad) interests, for example, the need to spend money or to support women's groups, in accordance with their mandates and programming. Those interests may not always align with the interests of women's groups who are trying to influence peace negotiations. In addition, teaming up with international partners may give rise to debates about legitimacy grounded in the local context, depending on how these international actors are perceived and what security operations they are connected to. Aligning with international actors can affect perceptions of neutrality, for example, where the very idea of 'internationalising' the conflict is seen to be a demand of only one side in the conflict, or where international actors are associated with security strategies that are viewed very differently by opposing sides in the conflict. Again, politically smart engagement is needed, which contemplates a multi-layered approach to influencing for change.

Guidance on Gender Aspects of Security Arrangements Including Conflict-related Sexual Violence

Mediators and their teams should work with conflict parties to:

- Identify whether conflict-related sexual violence has been used as a method or tactic of warfare and include it as a **prohibited act** in the definition or principles of ceasefire and peace agreements, as well as in security, accountability and monitoring arrangements.
- Put in place **gender-sensitive monitoring and verification arrangements** for ceasefire agreements, including gender expertise, female monitors and translators, and effective dispute resolution mechanisms; create an enabling environment for women and men to safely report conflict-related sexual violence violations; and pursue adequate and timely funding to ensure effective implementation, monitoring and verification of ceasefires and peace agreements.
- Include additional provisions for **protection for women and children** in communities facing greater security threats; insist on detailed security arrangements such as the provision of security escorts, regular patrolling and command posts (e.g. for sanitation areas, water and firewood collection points and markets).

- **Acknowledge that amnesties are prohibited** for serious crimes under international law, including conflict-related sexual violence; arrangements for transitional justice, including prosecution, reparations and truth-seeking bodies need to address conflict-related sexual violence crimes among acts of violence perpetrated against women and men.
- Systematically gather **early warning information**, then investigate and report it.
- Address conflict-related sexual violence, where relevant, when **dismantling, disengaging and withdrawing armed forces** and integrating former combatants into security or state institutions.
- Mandate **security forces** to combat and monitor conflict-related sexual violence, provide training on effective military response and law enforcement, and develop a code of conduct to vet security actors, prohibit CRSV and punish misconduct.
- Ensure that **disarmament, demobilization and reintegration provisions** are gender-sensitive, acknowledge the role of women in the conflict (e.g. as combatants) and their special needs, and identify women as beneficiaries of post-conflict programmes.

(Source: United Nations, 2017. *Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies*, page 30)

PART IV: QUESTIONS FOR GENDER EQUALITY ADVOCATES FOR NEGOTIATIONS ON SECURITY

It can be useful to think about engagement with security issues across time within processes, and at each stage to ask questions to frame thinking. Asking at each stage where women are, and how the provision is likely to affect them, provides a good starting point. The box below contains some indicative questions to provoke further thinking.

Conflict

Mediators and their teams should work with conflict parties to:

- What are the immediate crisis issues affecting women's security?
- What avenues of influence with armed actors exist to ameliorate the situation?
- How could initial steps away from violence build confidence between armed actors and the communities they operate in, and between armed groups?
- If conflict is impossible to stop, how is it being documented and captured? How is gender-based conflict being captured? What international organizations can assist with this?

Negotiation stage

- Is a ceasefire being negotiated?
- Will it be secret or include formal public commitments that specify what a ceasefire violation is?
- Can it be influenced to prohibit the forms of violence that are most affecting civilian populations and women?
- Is there an issue of sexual violence which needs to be named and addressed in security discussions? Who is best placed to name and address it in talks processes?
- Is there an experience of local provision of security that might be helpful to ensuring the success of a wider ceasefire arrangement?
- What monitoring and response mechanism would bring confidence to the security situation? How might women best be involved?
- What security issues are going to be difficult for the parties to reach agreement on at this stage of the process, but will need to be dealt with at some stage? How can a platform for addressing them be laid down at this stage in the process?
- When will international support in gender issues be useful in forcing the parties to address them? When will it undermine local women's capacity to influence local powerful actors?

- What are the particular needs and opportunities for women combatants and women associated with armed groups? Are there particular security challenges facing these women?
- What other strategies should be put in place to influence actors and achieve security

Agreement stage

- Who will verify security commitments by the parties? Are women to be involved in the bodies? Are forms of peacekeeping to be put in place? What will be their gender make-up and training?
- What risks for women will demobilisation and peacekeeping present, and what steps would mitigate these risks?

Long-term implementation

- How should security be dealt with constitutionally in terms of reform?
- What should the security sector look like in terms of its ethos and gender balance and broader social make-up?
- What should its principles and values be?

outcomes for women: Who holds influence with the parties on security issues? Who do they listen to? Can those people be influenced to raise serious gender concerns? What other political alliances and strategies might be useful to create pressure for change, or put gender issues on the table?

- Has the process committed to a security sector reform strategy? Is addressing gender-based violence an objective of that strategy? Who is involved in the reform process, and how are women included? How are reform leaders consulting with women?

- How can accommodation of past armed factions be harmonised with over time reducing the size of the security sector, to reflect a more peaceful situation and a more 'normalised' role?

CONCLUSION

Engaging with security issues requires smart strategies and language. It requires working to influence the agendas of the parties to the conflict, and those who are in charge of the process (including international mediators), from the earliest stages of the process possible.

Security is a political issue, hence negotiating security in a peace process often requires addressing security using political language. Legal obligations clearly apply and can be helpfully asserted, but merely asserting legal standards is not always the most effective way to have a peace process seriously address women's concerns. Most importantly, strategies should be developed with the understanding that processes

change over time; that different entry points for different women's concerns arise at different stages of a process; and that at each stage negotiations can be approached not just in terms of making substantive gains, but also with a view to creating entry points for addressing women's security concerns at the next stage. It is important to both engage with the process as it exists, while trying to reshape its central concerns.

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