

# Chapter 3

## MEDIATING INCLUSIVE CEASEFIRES

*This chapter explores how greater inclusion can increase the prospects for an effective, comprehensive and sustainable outcome from ceasefire negotiations and agreements. It emphasizes the full and meaningful participation of women and introduces innovative process design options to strengthen inclusion.*

### 3.1 Why is inclusion in ceasefires important?

Ceasefires have traditionally been considered a matter for military forces and their personnel, whose focus is on armed groups and on securing an end to violence. This approach has often narrowed the field of participants by sidelining unarmed civilians, including women, despite the critical role they tend to play in persuading belligerents to engage in ceasefire talks. Such approaches run the risk of rewarding belligerent parties with a seat at the negotiating table, while inadvertently incentivizing other groups to turn to violence to secure their goals.

The argument for inclusion in mediation is premised on the understanding that integrating diverse societal perspectives can help to address the root causes of conflict, reflect the needs and experiences of those affected by violence, and generate a sense of ownership in the agreement among local populations. Inclusion can strengthen the legitimacy of a process, transform community relations, reduce external risks and, above all, increase the sustainability of outcomes.

Furthermore, as noted in Chapter 2, the safety and protection of civilians and of the infrastructure that sustains their lives and livelihoods are fundamental to any ceasefire mediation or negotiation process. An inclusive ceasefire negotiation process can advance the safety and protection of civilians, notably by generating an agreement that promotes gender- and age-sensitive outcomes that are compliant with international humanitarian law and human rights law; commits parties to dedicated provisions on the safety and protection of civilians; and contains inclusive implementation modalities that allow civilians – and particularly women – to play central roles in all dimensions of ceasefire implementation.

*In 2003, Muslim and Christian women in Liberia came together to launch the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace campaign to put pressure on belligerents to negotiate. During subsequent ceasefire talks in Accra, Ghana, Liberian women conducted sit-ins directly outside the negotiating rooms, refusing to allow delegates to leave until an agreement had been signed.*

*In the Philippines, in 2003, the women-led Mindanao People's Caucus helped mobilize more than 10,000 internally displaced persons, who demanded an immediate ceasefire between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.*

### 3.2 Goals and policy framework of inclusive mediation

In the context of pursuing a ceasefire, inclusivity refers to the extent and manner in which the views and needs of civilian actors and stakeholders beyond the immediate warring parties are represented and integrated into the process and outcome of a mediation effort.<sup>22</sup> A central concern is the participation of women, youth networks and civil society organizations, as well as social, ethnic, religious, regional and other minority groups. An inclusive process does not necessarily involve all stakeholders directly in formal negotiations; rather, it can facilitate a structured interaction between conflict parties and other stakeholders, with the aim of including multiple perspectives in the mediation process.

Efforts to secure the full, equal, meaningful and direct participation of women in ceasefire and peace negotiations reflect a recog-

22. This Guidance draws on the definition of "inclusivity" provided in UN Guidance for Effective Mediation, 2012, p. 11, [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/GuidanceEffectiveMediation\\_UNDPA2012%28english%29\\_0.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/GuidanceEffectiveMediation_UNDPA2012%28english%29_0.pdf).



**Symposium on “Afghan Women: Messengers of Peace”**  
 Afghan women from across the country gathered in Kabul to discuss their experiences, vision and contribution to peace in the country, 2017.  
 Credit: UN Photo/Fardin Waezi

dition that women account for at least half of the residents of most areas, that they have an inherent right to be represented in decisions that affect their lives, and that the sustainability of any peace agreement depends on the extent to which women’s needs, experiences and perspectives of conflict inform peace-making.

The UN recognizes the need for women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in peacemaking through 10 Security Council resolutions that set out the women, peace and security agenda.<sup>23</sup> In two concurrent resolutions from 2016 on the UN peacebuilding architecture, the Security Council and General Assembly also emphasize the importance of including civil society organizations in peace processes.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, the international community recognized the role of youths in promoting and maintaining peace and security through UN Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020).<sup>25</sup> The global policy paper *We Are Here* (2019) calls for greater participation of young women and men in, around and outside the negotiation room to enhance the prospect that outcomes of peace processes will be widely accepted and sustainable.<sup>26</sup> In 2022 the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security set out a five-year strategic action plan on how this goal could be achieved.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.3 Inclusion in ceasefire mediation

While the strategic and rights-based need for inclusion is increasingly accepted at the global level, securing it in a given ceasefire negotiation takes time and requires political sensitivity. It is thus vital to sensitize conflict parties to the principle of inclusion in mediation as early as possible, ideally before any formal ceasefire mediation efforts commence.

The process of securing inclusion in ceasefire negotiations is shaped by context. To be effective, it considers the causes and dynamics of the local conflict, triggers and types of violence, positions of the conflict parties, needs of the population, objectives of the ceasefire, and potential linkages to political negotiations that may be ongoing or planned.

Critically, inclusion in the context of preliminary ceasefire negotiations can set the stage for participation in subsequent peacemaking efforts – such as by identifying which actors are to have a seat at the table and whose views are sought on process design and agenda setting. Inclusion in ceasefire negotiations – and its absence – can have lasting impacts far beyond the immediate cessation of violence, including on the effectiveness of long-term peace efforts.

23. UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security was the first resolution to recognize the differentiated impact of conflict on women, women’s role in preventing and resolving conflict, their fundamental right to be included in peace processes, and calls for women’s equal participation in peacemaking efforts.

24. Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) and General Assembly resolution A/RES/70/262 emphasize that “inclusivity is key to advancing national peacebuilding processes and objectives in order to ensure that the needs of all segments of society are taken into account”, while stressing that “civil society can play an important role in advancing efforts to sustain peace”.

25. Security Council resolution 2419 (2018) in particular calls for the meaningful inclusion of youths in formal and informal peace processes. The Security Council describes youths as “persons of the age of 18-29 years old”. See resolution 2250 (2015).

26. Ali Altiok and Irena Grizelj, *We Are Here: An Integrated Approach to Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes*, 2019, [https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2019-07/Global\\_Policy\\_Paper\\_Youth\\_Participation\\_in\\_Peace\\_Processes.pdf](https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2019-07/Global_Policy_Paper_Youth_Participation_in_Peace_Processes.pdf)

27. Irena Grizelj and Ali Saleem, *We Are in This Together: Operationalizing a Five-Year Strategic Action Plan for Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes*, Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, 2022, <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/YPS-five-year-strategic-action-plan.pdf>



**Outreach event organized by United Nations Mission in South Sudan**  
*A woman representative discusses the role of youth, traditional chiefs, women representatives and local officials in promoting peace and stability in Jonglei, 2012.*  
 Credit: UN Photo/Martine Perret

Securing inclusive approaches that enable the direct participation of civilian stakeholders can be more difficult in preliminary ceasefires, which are often attempted in environments of escalating violence, humanitarian urgency and a complete lack of trust. In contrast, definitive ceasefires, which allow for more formal inclusion arrangements among stakeholders, may more readily enable all parties and stakeholder groups to be represented in agreed formats and numbers. Given that definitive ceasefires are fundamentally forward-looking and tend to feature provisions on the functioning, form and restructuring of the security sector, they represent a rare opportunity to integrate inclusiveness into negotiations and outcomes that have far-reaching consequences for society at large.<sup>28</sup>

### 3.4 The role of mediators

The principle of inclusivity is foundational to the work of all mediators. By embedding inclusion into the analysis, advocacy, design and recommendations that guide a mediation process, mediators can send important signals within their own teams and beyond.

Within the mediation teams, mediators can practice gender and age inclusivity by ensuring that women occupy senior and influential roles, aiming for gender parity among the staff, ensuring that all team members have a strong understanding of the gender and age dimensions of their thematic areas of spe-

cialization, and including dedicated gender expertise on the mediation support team.

Inclusive mediation builds on conflict analysis that is gender- and age-sensitive and takes human rights dimensions into account. To develop a solid understanding of the root causes of a given conflict and the forces that promote violence or peace, such analysis can usefully involve comprehensive stakeholder mapping, as discussed in Section 2.2.3, and consider the full range of power structures and dynamics.

To support this work, mediators can engage with women's organizations, civil society groups and representatives of survivors of sexual violence, as well as youth networks, faith-based groups, traditional leaders, academia and private sector representatives. One way to do so is to build partnerships and establish regular consultations to ensure various views inform the mediation process, preferably starting as early as possible.

Mediators are uniquely positioned to ensure that the conflict parties understand the benefits of direct participation of civil society in the mediation process. They can advocate that women participate directly in the talks, not only as members of conflict party negotiation teams, but also, if appropriate, as part of independent third-party delegations. While conflict parties ultimately determine the composition of negotiation delegations, mediators can encourage them to appoint women to at least one-third of the senior positions in their negotiation delegations.

28. Roshni Menon, *Gender-responsive Ceasefires and Ceasefire Agreements*, UN Women, 2021, <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAsia/Docs/Publications/2021/06/af-Sustaining-Peace-brief-Ceasefires-English.pdf>

To ensure that all ceasefire provisions apply to all people, mediators can counsel delegations to use inclusive terminology. They can also advise parties to demonstrate their commitment to implementing an agreement in line with international humanitarian law, international human rights law and women's rights, for example by citing relevant international agreements and national laws, both under the ceasefire principles and as part of the provisions on monitoring and verification mechanisms.<sup>29</sup> In addition, provisions can specifically reaffirm the equal rights of men and women, address the differentiated needs of women in conflict, commit to gender-responsive and age-sensitive implementation of the agreement, and secure the engagement of women, youths and other civil society actors in ceasefire monitoring and verification mechanisms, as well as other interim or transitional arrangements.

### 3.5 Measures to support the participation of women and civil society

The direct participation of women, youth networks, civil society groups and other civilian stakeholders is the preferred approach to inclusion, however difficult or elusive it may be in certain contexts. Ceasefire negotiations during which these groups actively participate at the table are more likely to reflect their specific needs, address root causes of conflict and ensure a sense of ownership. If their mandate allows them to structure the process, mediators can provide incentives to encourage direct participation, for example by introducing quotas or granting conflict parties extra seats for negotiation delegations that must be filled by women, civil society representatives or independent third-party delegations.

Securing inclusive negotiations for ceasefires – or any other peace processes – requires multiple entry points and diverse modalities for engaging women and civil society actors. In addition to supporting their direct participation in ceasefire talks, mediators have a number of innovative, multi-track inclusion options at their disposal to ensure that the positions of the conflict parties and the mediation process itself are informed by diverse community perspectives. Among the options are holding civil society consultations, establishing specialized working groups, forming advisory boards, organizing forums for conflict parties to consult civilian actors, facilitating the presence of observers in talks, requesting suggested inputs for the agreement, sharing civil society groups' demands for peace with the parties and enabling work-

ing groups of civil society actors to review the agreement before it is finalized.

An inclusive approach to a ceasefire and security arrangements can extend beyond the mediation and negotiation phases if meaningful roles for women and civil society groups are formalized in the implementation of a ceasefire agreement. Once ceasefire agreements are finalized, mediators can arrange to provide women and civil society organizations with additional capacity-building to enable them to take up these formal roles in support of implementation. A central role for women and civil society representatives in ceasefire oversight and monitoring mechanisms can give them an ability to offer advice, ask questions, seek clarifications and make parties more accountable during implementation.

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*In Syria, the United Nations played a central role in configuring the Syrian Constitutional Committee and securing nearly 30 per cent of the 150 seats for women. Notably, the tripartite design of the structure of the Committee allowed for a 'middle third' component (civil society delegates), nearly 50 per cent of whom were women.*

### 3.6 Facilitating the participation of women and civil society

Ensuring the meaningful and effective engagement of women and civil society in ceasefire negotiations requires advance planning. Mediators are encouraged to reach out to representatives of women's groups, youth networks, and other civil society organizations as early in the mediation process as possible, including through tailored strategic communications and information sharing campaigns. Adequate advance notice of talks and related consultations is essential in this context.

Mediators can reinforce their efforts by facilitating dedicated capacity-building support for potential and engaged representatives. To identify concrete requirements for the participants' ongoing involvement in the talks, mediators can carry out risk assessments guided by the "do no harm" principle, so as to prevent any unintended harm to women and civil society representatives.

The participants' safety is among the most important considerations. In several contexts, women civil society representatives have been subjected to hate speech and other targeted attacks, both in person and online.

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29. Relevant international agreements include UN Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2419 (2018), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Agreement on a code of conduct governing behaviour towards women delegates may be required, as may physical protection or security measures, including for women who participate in consultative mechanisms or serve on technical bodies.

Mediators can also provide support services, such as access to appropriate subsistence allowances (to cover local transportation, airfare, hotel, meals, incidentals and other expenses), as required and on an equal basis for all delegates. Additional assistance can take the form of childcare, escorts and the scheduling of meetings in locations and at hours that help to maximize women's participation. By regularly engaging with donors who are involved in financing the talks, mediators can help to ensure that any financial regulations do not inadvertently limit logistical support in a way that restricts participation.

Civil society representatives who are involved in ceasefire talks or in the implementation of a final agreement may require specialized technical knowledge to make meaningful contributions. To that end, mediators can provide additional capacity-building opportunities, including via coordinated strategies with local and international partners that can deliver tailored training sessions. Innovative approaches to technical workshops – such

as the use of digital technologies, hybrid participation models and the linking of women delegates to other women who have participated in previous ceasefire negotiations around the world – can support strategizing, experience sharing and lessons learned meetings.

By providing a platform through which women's groups and civil society organizations can meet with conflict party delegations throughout ceasefire talks, mediators facilitate the communication of demands and grievances of the local population, while also building pressure on conflict parties to finalize an agreement and galvanizing momentum for an outcome. Such meetings may further benefit from supporting organizational arrangements, which the mediator could also facilitate.

More holistically, it is worth bearing in mind that women's groups and civil society organizations can face political and financial challenges that impinge on their ability to participate in mediation efforts. In such situations, mediators can help by apprising donors of the need for ongoing, reliable and flexible funding to support inclusion and participation in the negotiations.

**Release of former child soldiers in Yambio, Republic of South Sudan**

Children associated with armed conflict released by armed groups in Yambio, 2018. The next steps include their reintegration into the community and learning new skills to support themselves.

Credit: UN Photo/Isaac Billy



## KEY GUIDANCE POINTS: MEDIATING INCLUSIVE CEASEFIRES

- Inclusion in ceasefire negotiations can strengthen prospects for an effective, comprehensive and sustainable outcome, while also improving relations with and among local populations during implementation.
- Promoting the protection and security of civilians is a combined function of an inclusive ceasefire negotiation process, an agreement that commits parties to dedicated provisions on the safety and protection of civilians, and inclusive implementation modalities that allow civilians – and particularly women – to play central roles in all dimensions of ceasefire implementation.
- Inclusion in informal engagements before the actual ceasefire negotiations commence can be instrumental in setting the stage for who participates in subsequent peace talks. Focused, early engagement with conflict parties on inclusion is essential.
- The full, equal, meaningful and direct participation of women in ceasefire negotiations is fundamental to an inclusive process. Inclusivity also extends to the engagement of youth networks, civil society organizations and social, ethnic, religious, regional or other groups, depending on the context.
- In comparison to definitive ceasefires, preliminary ceasefires can present more challenges with respect to securing the direct participation of civilian stakeholders, largely because they are often negotiated with a narrow scope and in periods of escalating violence and limited trust. Informal engagements with a diverse set of stakeholders and consideration of their perceptions and concerns can help enhance inclusivity in such cases.
- Mediators can inform the parties of the benefits of inclusion, demonstrate the value of women's participation in their own teams, base their work on gender- and age-sensitive analysis and the advice of gender experts, and engage in regular consultations with women's groups and other civil society actors.
- Innovative process design options can help to strengthen inclusion and are worth exploring. Options include offering conflict parties' incentives, for example by providing additional seats at the table, so long as they are filled with women delegates; proposing reserved seats for women and civil society representatives in negotiations, including third-party delegations; and making strategic use of digital platforms.
- To complement women and civil society delegates' direct participation in ceasefire processes, mediators can pursue broader inclusion options. For example, they can establish specialized working groups, civil society consultation forums and advisory boards; facilitate the presence of observers in talks; transmit civil society demands for peace to negotiators; and enable gender-inclusive civil society working groups to review the draft agreement before finalization.
- Inclusive implementation of ceasefire agreements is essential. The use of inclusive terminology helps to ensure that all provisions apply to all people. Mediators can also encourage parties to consider inclusive monitoring and verification mechanisms that incorporate the participation of women and civil society actors.
- Ensuring that women and civil society representatives can effectively participate in ceasefire negotiations may require the provision of dedicated support. Working with local and international partners, mediators are well placed to enable delegates to access technical advice, capacity-building, security services, transportation, childcare, financial compensation, access to technology and other support, as required.