

# STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSIVE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

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## OVERVIEW

The success of international peace and development efforts, which include conflict prevention, management and resolution, depends greatly on the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as women and youth. In this session, four experts led thematic group discussions on transitional justice and reconciliation, youth engagement and women's inclusion. Using their own experiences with inclusivity initiatives as a starting point, these experts challenged participants to consider why and how the inclusion of actors from various levels and sectors of society has increased the success of formal and informal peace and development processes.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

The discussion on inclusive transitional justice and reconciliation processes provided poignant examples of the complexity of post-conflict societies. Transitional justice is known to be an important step towards building and sustaining peace, but it can be viewed as an obstruction of justice when punitive measures do not meet victims' expectations. For example, many Colombians were disappointed that the military was able to negotiate impunity despite evidence of severe human rights violations perpetrated by both state soldiers and FARC combatants. On the concept of justice in post-conflict societies, discussants considered the challenge of implementing programmes that adequately address abuses at different levels and balance individual and group interests. For example, in Sri Lanka, individual victims primarily sought acknowledgement of atrocities while NGOs focused on holding perpetrators to account.

The discussion on women's inclusion concentrated on connecting local and national peacebuilding agendas, and the diverse ways in which women peacebuilders have helped to bridge the two. The Cameroonian section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) reflected on its contributions to the country's National Action Plan (NAP) on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and how it engages activists from different regions to diffuse ownership of this agenda and increase the credibility of the NAP among diverse Cameroonian communities. In so doing, WILPF Cameroon also provides access to the national agenda for community actors and allows them to identify how the WPS agenda and the NAP might affect local realities. Discussants agreed that women peacebuilders should include traditional leaders and men in their work as a means of mainstreaming women's role as peace and security actors and to gain access to decision makers.

In the thematic discussion on youth, peace and security, participants assessed existing youth contributions to peace and development as well as opportunities to support youth engagement following the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security. Effective youth inclusion requires the engagement of young people at all levels and sectors of society, including those who are marginalized due to their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion. Drawing on the knowledge and perspectives of various peace and development actors, including through regional consultations with youth, the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security is an example of how inclusive processes can strengthen the engagement of young people. Discussants suggested that youth inclusion



advocates should learn from past efforts to engage women in peace and development. Platforms connecting women's organizations to youth initiatives in Somalia have facilitated the sharing of lessons learned between the two.

The fourth thematic discussion focused on engaging marginalized youth in 'peaceful' countries. The activities of Fryshuset and the Pluralism and Dialogue Institute (PDI) were presented as an illustration of the need for and successful examples of inclusion of marginalized youth in the Swedish context. Non-judgemental approaches that create opportunities to engage *all* marginalized youth regardless of their prior associations or activities are seen as critical. Effective programming at Fryshuset/PDI frequently uses music, sports and other passionate interests as means of engaging young people. The use of positive role models—often former criminals, gang members and violent extremists—has also proved successful in building trust between youth and peace and development initiatives and authorities, particularly in disengagement and reintegration projects. Examples from Pakistan and Kenya demonstrate the benefits of similar context-based approaches to engaging marginalized youth in conflict-affected countries.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Transitional justice for national reconciliation

- Inclusive transitional justice and reconciliation initiatives must analyse the underlying inequalities that perpetuate conflict in order to transform a society and sustain peace.
- Transitional justice processes must acknowledge and balance individual and group interests at different levels.
- Time should be allocated to planning the sequencing of transitional justice activities and room left to adapt the activities and schedule along the way.

### 2. Women's engagement: from local to national to global

- Efforts to engage women in peace and development processes should create opportunities for their inclusion at the local, national and international levels. Engaging women from different regions increases the credibility of national initiatives and ensures that diverse perspectives are represented.
- Donors and implementing organizations should facilitate the use and development of existing international legal and political frameworks by grassroots organizations.
- Women peacebuilders and advocates of women's inclusion should engage local faith and traditional leaders, as well as men and boys.

### 3. The inclusion of youth in peace and development

- To facilitate youth inclusion, donors should reform funding structures to allow for greater flexibility in providing financial and technical support to smaller youth peacebuilders and initiatives, including through small-scale grants.
- Recognizing the diversity of youth and that the definition of 'youth' varies according to context, implementing organizations should consider mechanisms that engage a multitude of young people from different backgrounds, and with different experiences and perspectives, and those from more marginalized sectors of society.
- Create and support platforms that promote intergenerational exchange—including with authorities and decision makers—as well as mentoring opportunities and knowledge sharing between different inclusivity agendas.
- Promote a positive narrative on the role of youth in their communities and provide young people with positive alternatives to violent and destructive environments.

