

NO ROOM FOR MARGINALIZATION: AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO GENDER-SENSITIVE PEACE PROCESSES

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OVERVIEW

Despite the emphasis of the United Nations Agenda on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) on applying a gender perspective, the agenda tends to emphasize ‘women’ rather than ‘gender’ in existing security practices in the fields of peace and security. As a result of their binary gender norms and lack of intersectional perspective, current policy debates and practices often perceive women as a homogeneous group and treat women’s participation in peace processes as synonymous with a gender perspective. This risks excluding women and men in marginalized groups as well as other gender identity groups from post-conflict and new political settlements.

FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES

With the aim of advancing a more inclusive WPS agenda, this session sought to increase understanding of intersectional approaches to gender-sensitive peace processes, focused primarily on women and men from marginalized groups as well as other gender identity groups, and to devise strategies for their inclusion in WPS discussions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Exclusion and marginalization of groups in peace processes and peacebuilding occurs as a result of power dynamics and heteronormative frameworks with built-in gender binary assumptions. There are limitations in the language surrounding women and gender in the WPS agenda that promote gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding and peace processes. For example, this results in the exclusion of gender and sexual minority from discussions of gender in peace processes. Young men’s experiences are also often ignored, their experiences are compartmentalized as one and there is a failure to recognize the intersection between age, geographic localization, community status and sexual orientation.

Peace processes privilege particular groups and tend to favour stability over inclusion. Even in the effort to promote inclusion, difficulties are often encountered in measuring inclusion along a peace process. It is not easy to map inclusion throughout every step and many guarantees made to groups during peace negotiations are disregarded during the implementation stage. The very nature of peace processes—secretive and occurring behind closed doors—also results in a lack of dissemination of knowledge to other local groups and at the community level. Track 1 negotiations are more exclusive, partially due to the dilemma of inclusion versus efficiency in a highly formal structure. Track 2 negotiations are more community-driven and allow for the inclusion of many groups. Given that women, youth and marginalized groups are often proactive in civil society organizations, constant inclusion of such groups in the informal process would be a way to promote their inclusion in the process when bridging track 1 and track 2.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure inclusive participation at all stages of peace processes: not only at the stage of formulation of peace agreements, but also at the stage of designing the process and implementing the agreement.

- Institutionalize mechanisms to ensure that inclusion is continuous during the implementation phase after an agreement is signed. Noteworthy examples include the special body responsible for guaranteeing gender focus in the implementation of the Colombian Peace Accord.
- Create mechanisms for self-evaluation and monitoring the level of inclusion of different groups as well as spaces where excluded groups can feel safe to generate discussion.
- Adopt localization strategies to increase inclusion of marginalized group with a focus that communities can relate to, such as ‘la minga’ in Colombia or ‘hijab troops’ in the Bangsamoro, the Philippines.
- Promote alliances between different marginalized groups, such as indigenous, women, rural and LGBTI groups to increase their visibility and lobbying power among powerful actors during peace processes.
- Continuously emphasize the grievances and concerns of the LGBTI community and other neglected groups particularly at higher political levels.

SESSION QUOTES

‘If it is not inclusive by design, it is hard to bring it to the table at a later stage.’

‘People who are not visible in your horizon would not be visible in your answers.’

RESOURCE LINKS AND DOCUMENTS

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