Peace Mediation Essentials

Gender and Peace Mediation

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Without taking the gender-specific context of conflict and peacebuilding into account, negotiation processes lack substance and legitimacy and this may jeopardize their sustainability. This imperative is mirrored by the UN Security Council Resolutions on «Women, Peace and Security» which call for the stronger participation of women in peacebuilding, the prevention of gender-based violence and protection of the rights and needs of women and girls during and after armed conflicts, and a gender-sensitive approach to peacebuilding. All these resolutions make a gender-sensitive approach to peace negotiations and mediation processes a standard and professional practice, which is the focus of this guidance note.

Content

Key Messages

- Both women and men are actors for change, conflict and peace. Think of creative ways to strengthen women´s and men´s capacity to survive, articulate their ideas, experiences.

- Gender* awareness is not a question of political correctness, but a question of accurate analysis, effective, sustainable and equal processes, and professionalism.

- There are indications that a "critical mass" of 30-40 % women participation in a peace process is needed to really make a difference.

- Collect and make use of information on how women and men are differently affected by the conflict and involved in peacebuilding.

- Consult as early as possible (male and female) gender experts, individual women and women's organisations, who work on questions of gender, conflict and peacebuilding.

* Gender defines the socially constructed processes of the relations between and among women and men. It includes three dimensions: (1) individual gender identity: social roles for individual women and men; (2) gender symbolism: stereotypes of "masculinity" and "femininity" and socially constructed ideas on "women" and "men"; (3) gender structure: organisation and institutionalisation of social, economic, political activities in the public and private sphere. For more information see Box 1 and see: Cordula Reimann, 2002: "All You Need Is Love ... and What About Gender?" Bradford University, Working Paper 10. Download

Background

While both women and men experience violent conflicts as gross human tragedies, the roles, experiences, needs and interests of women, girls, men and boys tend to be different. Women and men are involved in fighting, yet the majority of fighters remain men. Women tend to take over male-dominated roles, as heads of households, while at the same time looking after family members and caring for the injured. Both women and men are exposed to gun and gender-based violence. While men tend to be the prime targets of gun violence, women are mostly affected by sexual and domestic violence, displacement and social discrimination.
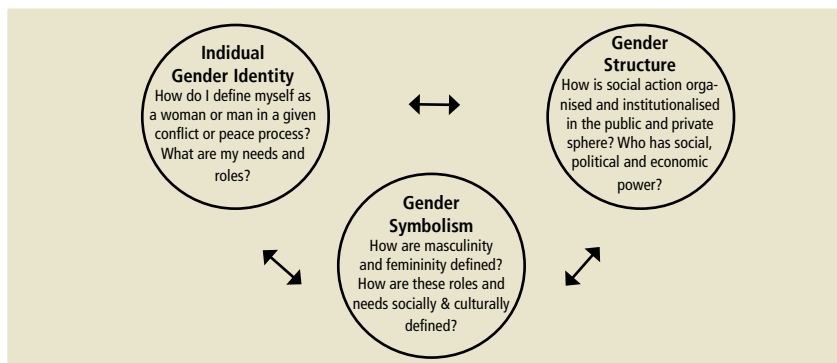
In violent conflicts, women and men act as agents for change, conflict and peace. Yet, with men being at the top of decision-making, most decisions in peace negotiation processes are taken by men. As the Initiative "1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize" has shown, women are mainly involved in the middle level leadership and in grassroots organisations and civil society peacebuilding organisations.

Actively including the perspective and views of all members of society – instead of excluding women as 50% of the population – increases the fulfilment of the needs, capacities and necessities of all members of society.

Without taking the gender-specific context of conflict and peacebuilding into account, negotiation processes lack substance and legitimacy and this may jeopardize their sustainability.

This imperative is mirrored by the UN Security Council Resolutions 1325-1960 on "Women, Peace and Security". UNSCR 1325, the first ever passed UN Security council resolution on women, conflict and peacebuilding in October 2000, calls for a) the stronger participation of women in peacebuilding, b) the prevention of gender-based violence and protection of the rights and needs of women and girls during and after armed conflicts, and c) a gender-sensitive approach to peacebuilding. The demands of UNSCR 1325 were reinforced by UNSCR 1889 calling for concrete steps to improve implementation of 1325 and increase women´s participation in post-conflict proces-ses, such as indicators and proposals for monitoring mechanisms for 1325. UNSCRs 1820, 1888 and 1960 address gender-based or sexualized violence in violent conflict highlighting the need for the protection of women and the prosecution of sexual violence. It is UNSCR 1820 which is the first UNSCR that links the prevention of sexual violence with women´s participation in peace processes stressing women´s leadership and participation. UNSCR 1888 and 1960 reinforce and specify 1820. UNSCR 1888 calls for more target measures and indicators, like a database on gender-based vio-lence and a UN Secretary Special Representative on Sexual Violence on Conflict and Women Protection Advisers (WPAs) to UN operations. UNSCR 1960 strengthening 1888 calls for fighting impunity and establishing monitoring and accounting systems on gender-based violence.

While bearing in mind the demands of these UN Resolutions, this memo takes a gender-sensitive perspective towards peace negotiations.

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Different needs and interests of women and men

Box 1: Three dimensions of Gender (Triangle)

Different levels of Leadership

PeaceWomen Across the Globe Website

Including the views of all members of society

UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) 1325-1960

UN-Operational Guidance Note "Women in Peace Processes and Agreements". Download

Key Principles

What gender perspective on mediation does and does not involve	What a gender perspective **does** involve	What a gender perspective **does not** involve
Conflict analysis	Conducting a gender-sensitive conflict analysis, i.e. asking what different and same needs, fears and interests do women and men have, and who has the power among the conflict parties.	Conducting a conflict analysis mentioning the roles of women in a separate section or focusing only on women as "victims".
Different roles	Looking at the inequalities and different roles between and among women and men. Designing interventions that take inequalities and differences between women and men into account.	Treating women and men as the same or focusing exclusively on women.
Actors for change	Recognising that both women and men are actors for change, conflict and peace.	Treating women only as a "vulnerable group" and men only as "perpetrators".
Different needs	Recognising that men and women have different needs. E.g. men may be the prime victims of direct violence and women may be survivors of gender specific violence, and therefore they have specific psycho-social and health needs.	Ignoring the gender-specific dimensions of violence against men and women. Ignoring the gender-based violence against men and boy children.
Quotas	Including women in the negotiation process: Moving beyond counting the number of participants to looking at impacts of initiatives. However, generally a "critical mass" of 30% participation is required to have an impact.	Striving for equal or 50/50 (men/women) participation. "Enforce" quotas and affirmative action to ensure an equal - politically correct - participation of women as mediators or representatives of conflict parties.
Cultural specifics	"Conservative" cultures: Working with men as tribal leaders or elders and negotiating the rights and public resources for women by appealing to the men's self-interest.	Working with local authorities and accepting the gender-specific asymmetries as "culture-specific", given and unchangeable.
Group differences	Understanding the differences among different groups of women and men.	Assuming that all women or all men will have the same interests.
Context-specific analysis	Understanding the specific situation and documenting actual conditions and priorities.	Assuming and generalising who does what work and who has which responsibilities.
Indicators	Coming up with indicators for a successful application of a gender-sensitive negotiation process, e.g. increased gender awareness of men and women participating in mediation processes.	Assuming that as soon as there are women in the negotiating team and/or at the "peace table", the negotiation will automatically be gender-sensitive and conflict issues will be dealt with in a gender-sensitive way.

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Understanding and analysing conflicts

Both women and men may have been exposed to gender-based violence. Given the stigma attached to gender-based violence and the "culture of impunity" in conflict contexts, women and men may not seek professional help and legal prosecution.

Although conflict situations tend to increase both men's and women's vulnerability, it is important not to relegate women to the category of victim. Women as well as men make choices, develop coping strategies, mobilise scarce resources and play significant roles in their communities. Just as not all men share the same interests and priorities, neither do all women. There are class, ethnic, religious, age and other power differences among women and these are often heightened during conflict.

Each situation and conflict must be understood on its own terms. It is misleading to carry assumptions from one country to another about the gender division of labour or who are combatants or how societies reconstitute themselves following war. Given that gender identities and relations can change over time and during conflicts themselves, it is important to carry out context-specific analyses and consultations.

More information on how to carry out a gender sensitive conflict analysis can be found in the UNIFEM Policy Briefing Paper 2006 "Gender and Conflict Analysis".

Designing and implementing mediation interventions

Some activists translate the insight that 'gender' involves looking at women and men into the conclusion that therefore both should be given equal opportunities. And clearly, the call for equal participation is a fundamental human right and political sine qua non.

Yet, the political call and demand for women's participation in societies with rigid and fixed gender stereotypes may be less welcome or even rejected. Culture is subject to constant change by society and is not monolithic and fixed. The key is to identify and negotiate entry-points in/for the negotiation process, which respect cultural characteristics like "honour" and "face saving" while opening up space for women's and men's needs and interests. The lesson is to stress that women's participation will benefit the sustainability of the negotiation process and hence is in the very self-interest of the elders and tribal leaders.

A crucial insight from a gender perspective, however, is that in order to have more equitable impacts on the peace process, it may be necessary to provide specific resources to women and women's organisations or focus attention on women's particular priorities. This could take the form of separate "peace fora for women", which take place prior or during the "official peace negotiations". It is crucial that these separate "negotiating fora" for women work closely together and are institutionally linked with the official negotiation processes and are based on a deeper understanding of gender roles and relationships.

Sidebar

Avoid stereotyps

Context specific analysis

Box 2: Gender and Conflict Analysis [Download](#)

Equal opportunities

Respect for cultural context

Specific peace fora

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Burundi
The All-Party Burundi Women´s Peace Conference, which was held alongside the Arusha talks in 2000, brought together female members from the nineteen negotiating parties, observers, refugees, internally displaced women and diasporas to develop a common vision for Burundi's peace and reconstruction. Nearly eighty participants presented their recommendations to President Mandela, heads of negotiating parties and the facilitation team.

Guatemala
Luz Mendez in Guatemala, as the only women in the formal delegation of one dominant rebel group, had strong backing by local indigenous, women´s groups and organisations and was able to raise gender-specific concerns. The Guatemalese peace agreement of 1996 is still hailed as the most gender-sensitive agreement (see box 4).

Liberia
Women via religious and social networks organized mass demonstrations and demanded in 2003 to stop the killings chanting the slogans "We want peace. No more war". They were able to use their "women´s power" and forced a meeting with President Charles Taylor and extracted a promise from him to attend peace talks in Accra. A delegation of Liberian women went to Accra to apply pressure on the warring factions during the peace talks and lobbying the UN and the USA for their support for the peace process. They staged a "sit in" outside of the venue - where the negotiations took place - blocking all the doors and preventing anyone from leaving the peace talks without a resolution.

Monitoring and evaluation

Although representation is important, it may not always be appropriate to set a goal of half women/half men participants at specific negotiation stages. It is more relevant to look at the overall impact of the intervention: Does a particular political event or initiative widen the gaps between women and men or move to narrow them (where possible)?

Possible indicators are, for example, sex-disaggregated data, participation of women in negotiating and mediation teams; and more in-depth understanding of the relevant (different and same) interests and needs of women and men.

Questions for the mediator

- Does your conflict analysis include gender-specific and sex-disaggregated data and conflict information? For example on gender-based violence against women and men, different interests and roles of women and men.

- Do you have access to written or verbal information on the same and different roles and experiences of women and men during the conflict and their respective ideas for peacebuilding?

- How do you get in contact with individual women or women's organisations, which are well based and situated in the wider community? How do you collect sex-disaggregated data in the given conflict scenario?

- If women are not at the negotiation table – neither in the mediating team nor among the conflict parties – what are the reasons, i.e. what are the practical, social and political hurdles for women participating, how can these hurdles be surmounted?

- Are you familiar with the most relevant and local action plans of international norms (e.g. UNSCR 1325, CEDAW, …), and mechanisms on and provisions for gender equality?

For a gender-sensitive peace agreement see the Guatemala comprehensive set of peace agreements, which explicitly mentioned women, indigenous women and the roles they played in maintaining the peace.

Pre-Agreement Phase ("talks about talks")

■ Is the term "gender" culturally understood? Are terms like "human dignity" and "human security" culturally more respected terms to discuss the different and same interests and needs of women and men?

Specific questions for the mediator

■ What do you know about the gender-specific composition of negotiation teams and conflict parties?

■ Have you made contact with (male or female) gender experts, individual women, women's groups or organizations?

■ Are there "hidden" power asymmetries, which hamper women participating in the peace negotiations, like the place of the venue, the times of meetings, lacking negotiating skills etc.?

■ Are specific capacity-building trainings in negotiation techniques and skills and/or separate "negotiations for women only" necessary before the official negotiations take place?

■ Are there "traditional forms" or new forums of mediation/negotiation by women?

■ How can these informal activities be transferred into the formal peace processes?

■ If women are not part of the mediating team, why not?

■ Who are the women invited to the negotiating table?

■ Are they well connected and linked to the wider social community and do they represent the majority of local women and their needs and interests?

■ Have you got an overview of the most relevant gender-specific dimensions of the conflict issues, like the gender-specific violence, and the changed gender-specific division of labour during the conflict?

Agreement/Negotiation Phase

■ Do you use a gender-sensitive language, i.e. do you specify whose interests, fears and needs are concerned?

■ To what extent do you make certain assumptions about the interests and needs of women and men, which are more based on stereotypes that actual facts?

■ If women are not present at the negotiation table, have you ensured that women are able to articulate their specific needs, interests and security concerns and feed their priorities into the peace agreement?

Post-Agreement / Implementation Phase of a peace agreement

■ Have women and men been consulted and included in the monitoring mechanism for implementing the peace agreements?

■ Do local men and women have ownership about the peace process that affects their life? How can this ownership be sustained?

■ Are strategies in place on how to disseminate and publicise the agreement among the wider public, including local women's groups?

■ To what extent do female and male ex-combatants equally benefit from Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) processes?

Additional sources and links

United Nations Department of Political Affairs (2012), Guidance for Mediators "Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements". Website

UNIFEM (2010), Women´s Participation in Peace Negotiatons. Website

UN Women´s Portal on "Women, War & Peace" excellent and highly recommended homepage on latest international debates on UNSCRs. Website

The Peace Women Project, hosted by the Women´s International League for Peace and Freedom, monitors and works toward rapid and full implementation of UNSCRs 1325-1960 on "Women, Peace and Security". This brilliant website offers rich and up-to-date information and the ideal supplement to UN Women´s Portal. Website

Human Rights Watch produces on its website under "Women´s Rights" a variety of reports on "sexual violence", "refugee and internally displaced women", "trafficking of women and girls" and "women and security". Website

Women Watch, an inter-agency website. A gateway to information and resources on the promotion of gender equality throughout the United Nations system, including the United Nations Secretariat, regional commissions, funds, programmes, specialized agencies. Website

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979. Website

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. 31/10/2000 in various languages. Website

UN Security Council Resolution 1820: Women, Peace and Security (June 2008) in various languages. Website

UN Security Council Resolution 1888: Women, Peace and Security (September 2009) in various languages. Website

UN Security Council Resolution 1889: Women, Peace and Security (October 2009) in various languages. Website

UN Security Council Resolution 1960: Women, Peace and Security (December 2010) in various languages. Website