Key Findings: Gender

Political Settlements Research Programme
This research draws on the PA-X Peace Agreements Database (www.peaceagreements.org), a database of all peace agreements at any stage of the peace process from 1990 to 2018. The database is fully searchable and supports both qualitative and quantitative examination of peace agreements.

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Gender

This cross-cutting theme brings together our work exploring when and how women and sexual and gender minorities navigate inclusion across all stages of a peace process, and in particular engage with peace negotiations, power-sharing, gender-based violence, and institutional and legal reform processes. We examine how forms of violence change through conflict and what strategies women and gender equality advocates can use to intervene and influence peace settlements.

The Political Settlements Research Programme has involved partnership with the Transitional Justice Institute at Ulster University, Conciliation Resources and UN Women in this research. Key findings are outlined below under four themes:

► Peace Processes and Agreements
► Power-sharing
► Gender-based Violence
► PeaceFem App

For key PSRP publications related to constitution-building, visit our website at www.politicalsettlements.org/key-findings

Key Findings: Peace Processes and Agreements

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda established by UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), has been committed to by multiple states, including the UK. The challenge has been in delivering the commitments. The following handbook offers a range of examples on how implementation can be improved: The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Conflict by Ní Aoláin, Cahn, Haynes, and Valji 2018.
UNSC 1325, paragraph 8 calls for a 'gender perspective' to be adopted in peace agreements. However, 20 years later there is little evidence of peace agreements addressing gender adequately. Peace agreements seldom include a full gender perspective, and so the WPS agenda still needs better implementation (Bell and McNicholl 2019; Bell 2015a, 2015b; O'Rourke 2020). Only 21% of peace agreements signed between 1990 and 2016 include at least some provisions addressing women, their inclusion, and their rights, and most of these references come from comprehensive agreements.

Many of these peace agreement references are single line and tokenistic, and only a few include a more holistic gender perspective throughout. The PA-X Gender Peace Agreement Database contains all 371 peace agreements signed between 1990 and June 2020 (just under 20% out of 1868 peace agreements) that have provisions on women, gender or sexual violence. PA-X Gender looks at eleven different overarching types of provisions for women and gender equality.

Using these eleven types of provisions as a measure, the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s Sun City Agreement has the broadest range of gender-related provisions among all peace agreements signed in the 1990-2016 period, although implementation proved difficult and women have since that time continued to face key abuses. The only other agreements with consideration of gender in any holistic way are in Burundi, Colombia, Guatemala, Northern Ireland, and Sudan (Darfur agreements, not fully signed or implemented) (Bell and McNicholl 2019; Bell 2015a, 2015b; PA-X Gender Peace Agreement Database).

Provision for women in peace agreements are still largely limited to once-off provisions. PA-X Gender data shows that the majority of provisions for women in peace agreements relate to women’s participation and women’s equality, but with many merely providing basic equality references, or short references to participation with little mechanism for ensuring it. Other important issues, such as new institutions for women or women’s involvement in peace agreement implementation receive much less attention.
The inclusion of women in peace agreement texts tends to be located in the more comprehensive stages of peace processes. Only 29 out of 267 ceasefire agreements (just under 11%) signed between 1990 and 2016 include gender provisions (please refer to Forster and Bell 2019 for more analysis of gender mainstreaming in ceasefires). In the Nepali peace process, for example, none of the 12 ceasefire agreements refer to women, while 11 out of the 19 substantive agreements (about 58%) do (see PSRP Gender infographic).

It is important that better inclusion of women and their agendas for changed is included at all stages of a peace process: pre-negotiation and ceasefires often set agendas for change which constrain the main negotiations; while implementation talks often narrow their focus to armed groups, and renegotiate core commitments, including pushing back on women’s rights agreed earlier. Greater attention should therefore be paid to the inclusion of women at early and implementation stages of peace processes rather than focusing on comprehensive agreements alone.

The inclusion of provisions for women, girls and gender are only helpful insofar as they are implemented in reality. Analysis of data from the Peace Accords Matrix (Josh and Darby 2013) shows that these have a below average rate of implementation when compared with other forms of provision. Interestingly, those agreements with political power-sharing are not only significantly more likely to include these provisions, but are also more likely to be implemented (Bell and McNicholl 2019). This correlation may be a result of a wider inclusion project in these processes.
Power-sharing

Political power-sharing is surprisingly shown to be strongly correlated with gender inclusion provisions in a peace agreement. But often women find themselves excluded by how political and also other forms of power-sharing work in practice (Bell 2015b; Bell 2018; Bell and McNicholl 2019; Wise and Bell 2018; McWilliams 2015; Mackay and Murtagh 2019).

The following activities can be useful in making power-sharing proposals more inclusive:

► Producing strong gender-responsive conflict analysis of group power dynamics and incentives
► Modelling power-sharing proposals for their possible gender impact
► Supporting and resourcing the building of alliances between and across women’s groups
► Supporting and resourcing the building alliances with other groups, for example with civil and human rights groups, other equality constituencies and political groupings pushing for equality
► Formulating clear proposals for women’s inclusion
► Pushing for representation in the structures set up to advance the transitional deliberation
► Asking for support and technical advice from gender advocates and advisors

Women also will need to find ways to engage with territorial power-sharing (Wise and Bell 2018).

Gender and sexual minorities face multiple barriers that make their participation in peacebuilding activities difficult. These include: active exclusion of minorities by conservative cultural or religious interest groups, lack of funding, and challenges to personal safety (Ashe, 2019). International organisations should adopt good practice standards for how to support gender and sexual minorities to open up their own space in peacebuilding activities (Conciliation Resources 2018).
Gender-based Violence

Only 3% of peace processes contain agreements with provisions relating to gender-based violence (PSRP 2019).

Gender-based violence changes in motivation and in terms of enabling and constraining factors, and whether it is ‘labelled’ as a concern by international actors, from pre to during to post conflict (Swaine 2018).

There are clear continuities between pre-conflict gender-based violence and its manifestation during conflict. Swaine (2018) reveals how many of the patterns of pre-conflict violence, such as sexualised assault by men known to women, or domestic violence, are sustained by many of the same actors. Further, though there are distinctions in how gender-based violence is perpetrated during the conflict, the violence is nevertheless grounded in pre-conflict societal norms that normalise it.

Conflict-related violence and ostensibly ‘non-conflict’ gender-based violence is closely related (Swaine 2018). For example, conflict presents increased opportunities for state and non-state actors to enact violence due to collapse in the rule of law, as well as implicit impunity for perpetrators.

The first ever longitudinal study from during to post-conflict has also revealed some important disjunctures between gender-based violence during and after conflict. For example, in Northern Ireland, Doyle and McWilliams (2018) find that the use of firearms in intimate partner violence situations decreased as a result of the decommissioning of illegally held firearms and the regulation of legally held firearms that accompanied the peace process.

However, other forms of violence continue: intimate partner violence in conflict settings, is a practical and enduring obstacle to women’s participation in public political life, including peace processes and post-conflict political institutions (O’Rourke 2019; Doyle & McWilliams 2018). Institutional reform processes established by peace agreements can offer important dividends for improved police response to intimate partner violence (Doyle & McWilliams 2018).
Protections for women’s rights in armed conflict have expanded under international humanitarian law, international human rights law, international criminal law and the United Nations Security Council in the last three decades. There is now a wide range of international institutions engaged in defining, monitoring and enforcing women’s rights in different conflicts under international law (O’Rourke 2020). These institutions should be allies in securing gender-inclusive peacebuilding.

PSRP research has found that international norms can have a role in:

▶ Setting domestic agendas around conflict-resolution (Marks 2019; Mackay and Murtagh 2019);
▶ Underpinning women’s movement mobilisation to challenge the prevailing political settlement and to find allies in other social movements (Yousuf and Close 2019);
▶ Underpinning activities by international institutions in conflict-affected settings (O’Rourke 2019);
▶ Informing the text of peace agreements (Bell and McNicholl 2019); and
▶ Leveraging external interveners (Mackay and Murtagh 2019).

However, there is significant scope to:

▶ Strengthen the legal status of specific protections to women’s rights (O’Rourke 2020) – including the need for a better framework for protection of women in times of occupation (Ni Aoláin 2020);
▶ Improve how key international institutions comply with and implement in practice their own guarantees of women’s rights (O’Rourke 2020). In particular, the UN Security Council has shown a poor record of implementing its women’s rights commitments in its country-specific activities.
▶ Improve coordination amongst key international institutions such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Criminal Court, and the United Nations Security Council, including on issues such as providing human rights training for peacekeeping troops and ending impunity of peacekeepers perpetrating sexual violence (O’Rourke 2020).
PeaceFem App

PeaceFem is a mobile phone app that illustrates women’s inclusion in peace processes around the world. PeaceFem provides information about strategies women’s rights advocates have used to influence peace agreements, information about the enabling and constraining factors that shaped the space for influence, and the gender provisions in the peace agreements that resulted and information as to how well they were implemented.

PeaceFem is a collaboration between UN Women, InclusivePeace, the Monash University Gender, Peace and Security Centre, and the Political Settlements Research Programme at the University of Edinburgh.
PSRP Key Findings Series

This is part of PSRP’s Key Findings Series. Key findings from all of our research themes are available at www.politicalsettlements.org/key-findings, including gender, constitution building, power-sharing, elections, peace processes, and transitional justice.

For more information on the Political Settlements Research Programme, visit www.politicalsettlements.org
About Us

The Political Settlements Research Programme (PSRP) is centrally concerned with how political settlements can be made both more stable, and more inclusive of those affected by them beyond political elites. In particular, the programme examines the relationship between stability and inclusion, sometimes understood as a relationship between peace-making and justice.

The programme is addressing three broad research questions relating to political settlements:

1. How do different types of political settlements emerge, and what are the actors, institutions, resources, and practices that shape them?

2. How can political settlements be improved by internally-driven initiatives, including the impact of gender-inclusive processes and the rule of law institutions?

3. How, and with what interventions, can external actors change political settlements?

The PSRP is a research consortium, of which University of Edinburgh is the lead organisation, with partners including: Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR), Conciliation Resources (CR), International IDEA, The Institute for Security Studies (ISS), The Rift Valley Institute (RVI), and the Transitional Justice Institute (TJI, Ulster University).

Find out more at: www.politicalsettlements.org