



Gender and conflict:

making elite bargaining processes more inclusive

Conflict and violence are profoundly gendered. Armed conflict is experienced differently by women and men because conflict takes place in societies that are fundamentally shaped by gender. Furthermore, discriminatory gender norms and **gendered forms of violence underpin, fuel and exacerbate violence and armed conflict.**

If they are to be effective and sustainable, **efforts to end armed conflict** must therefore be sensitive to and **work to address gender inequalities and differences.**

Elite bargaining processes often provide the first steps out of armed conflict. Yet they are likely to be **male-dominated, exclude women's voices and experiences,** and ignore the gendered causes and impacts of armed conflict.

Unless women influence and inform elite bargaining processes, **stability and resilience will be limited** and apply to only certain spaces, types of violence and particular groups, undermining conditions for sustainable peace. Focusing only on elites risks obscuring the importance and influence on non-elite spaces, where women are more likely to be present and influential.

Engaging with elite bargaining processes without supporting women's participation equally ignores the potential **contribution women's meaningful participation can make to the durability and quality of peace agreements.**

Efforts to increase **inclusion therefore should not be left 'until later'**. Systemic gender discrimination and gendered violence persist and even increase after a formal cessation to armed conflict. Attempting to support inclusion at a later stage **risks it not happening at all** as power structures and opportunities for transformation are closed.

It is possible to **pursue inclusive processes** even within the fragile elite bargaining process. There are different **elite and non-elite entry points** that can facilitate inclusion and influence a gender perspective.

