



13 Inclusivity and Participation: Working Together

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“At this crucial time in our lives (....) I don’t think you can help but be involved.”

Nina Simone

Inclusivity and participation have been steadily gaining traction as “buzzwords” within the peacebuilding community. But what might inclusive and participatory processes look like in practice in deeply divided and war-torn societies when trust is low and competition for power is high? What are the options for meaningful inclusivity and participation when there are major obstacles to working together but, at the same time, broad agreement is indispensable to avoid a relapse into violence? Different, context-

INCLUSIVITY | the degree of access to important decision-making areas for all levels and sectors of state and society.

PARTICIPATION | involves indirect or direct active engagement by either a group or an individual in a process beyond norms and principles. Both are considered crucial in peacebuilding in order to increase a sense of ownership and responsibility, and alleviate social grievances of exclusion and marginalisation of groups.

specific models will be needed when negotiating ceasefires and when conducting National Dialogues (→ Breaking Deadlocks). It is helpful for the debate to disentangle the key concepts, challenges, opportunities and potential limitations of inclusivity and participation at different stages in peace processes. In the following, we also offer some reflections on which elements might facilitate the creation of participatory and inclusive peace processes beyond norms and principles.

On terminology ...

Inclusivity and participation are two keywords that are often lumped together in one sentence, or used interchangeably. Although closely related, there is a difference in nuance between the two. Broadly defined, *inclusivity* in peace processes refers to the degree of access to important decision-making areas for all levels and sectors of state and society. Inclusivity is thus a principle or a norm that can be streamlined into a process and acted on. *Participation*, on the other hand, goes beyond norms and principles and involves indirect or direct active engagement by either a group or an individual in a process.

Inclusivity and participation: principles and practices

There are two axes along which inclusivity and participation in peace processes can be “measured”. *Horizontal inclusivity* refers to the degree to which a process is inclusive towards main power holders or elites in a society. *Vertical inclusivity*, on the other hand, refers to the degree to which various sectors and segments of society are included (e. g. marginalised groups such as women, youth, and ethnic and religious minorities). The degree of horizontal and vertical inclusivity can, among other things, be an indicator for the level of local ownership in a peace process.

That being said, inclusivity is and always will be understood and defined differently in different contexts and cultures and by different actors within the same context. In some contexts, merely to consult youth groups during peace negotiations can be seen as inclusive and participatory. In other contexts, anything other than a 50 per cent gender quota at the main negotiating table can be seen as exclusionary and non-participatory. Defining the scope and depth of inclusivity also depends on reconciling different views on what the conflict is about, who the relevant stakeholders are, and who may be potential spoilers. Often, some hold (or claim) the power to decide who has the right to be included and to participate, while others have to actively fight for their right to be included or to participate. Inclusivity and participation in peace processes, in other words, are often political (and politicised) and raise a host of questions around power (→ Empowerment and Ownership).

Coming to a broad agreement on what inclusivity and participation are and how they can be practised in a given peace process is thus an issue in itself that often needs specific attention at the start of a process, especially from international actors who can easily fall into the trap of oversimplifying and misunderstanding conflict and stakeholder dynamics. Consequently, inclusivity and participation are not only a question of going beyond norms and principles; they also involve moving beyond mere “box-ticking” and simple headcounts of representatives.

Process and outcome inclusivity

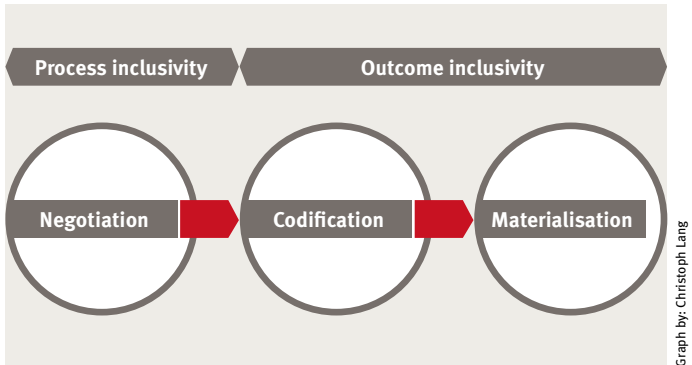


Figure 5, source: Dudouet/Lundström 2016

What are the different forms of inclusivity and participation?

Armed conflicts tend to reflect deep structural patterns of (real or perceived) social, political or cultural exclusion. Collective mobilisation in violent rebellion often results from shared grievances among marginalised social and political actors demanding greater participation and inclusivity in social, political and cultural arenas (→ Addressing Social Grievances). It is therefore imperative that a peace process brings about a more inclusive state and society beyond a negotiated peace agreement, as continued political, social and cultural exclusion is often fertile ground for violence relapse and re-mobilisation.

In general, inclusivity can be enacted in three different arenas in two ways. The arenas are *negotiation arenas* (such as ceasefire negotiations, peace agreement negotiations, National Dialogues and Constituent Assemblies), *codification arenas* (such as peace agreements, constitutional reform, bill of rights, legal reforms), and *materialisation arenas* (such as reformed institutions, land reforms, political party reforms and policy implementation).

The first way is *process inclusivity*, which describes the extent to which a peacemaking or peacebuilding forum such as ceasefire or peace negotiations is inclusive not only to the horizontal elite, but also to the vertical makeup of society. The second is *outcome inclusivity*, which describes the levels of responsiveness and representativeness of a peace agreement, new constitution or institution to all levels and sectors of society.

What are the possible formulas for inclusivity and participation?

There are different models that can be used for participation at different levels of peacemaking and peacebuilding. Some models include *incremental inclusivity*, which denotes a step-by-step process where the ceasefire might be negotiated by a small circle of actors due to security and/or trust constraints, with the level of inclusivity and participation increasing when, for example, a peace agreement or new constitution is being negotiated and implemented. A second model is *thematic multi-arena inclusivity*, where, for example, land reform might be negotiated at the main (semi-exclusionary) table, but simultaneously more inclusively organised roundtables identify broader needs and grievances, or broader cross-sectoral consensus is built by civil society outside of the formal negotiations. A third model is *parallel consultation forums with built-in mechanisms*, where different channels are utilised to influence the formal negotiations. These parallel forums can include consultation forums, public surveys to show the people's will on a particular matter, or petitions. These forums are intended to feed directly into the formal negotiation forum, to the mediators, or to the negotiators. The last model is *informal deadlock-breaking mechanisms within inclusive formal arenas*, such as smaller circles of trust-building processes between polarised actors within wider National Dialogues and Constitution Assembly negotiations (e.g. establishing deadlock-breaking committees within the Yemeni National Dialogue process, see → Breaking Deadlocks).

Challenges and ways forward

Process inclusivity and participation come with ingrained tensions, obstacles and challenges. Some issues often faced in peace processes are: the dilemma between inclusivity and efficiency, cosmetic participation (box-ticking) as opposed to meaningful participation, and deliberate refusal of some actors to participate; some may even attempt to spoil the process. The Berghof Foundation has been engaged in proposing ways of resolving the inclusivity-efficiency dilemma through its research project on post-war inclusive political settlements. In some contexts, the subjective perception that non-elite interests are being considered may be sufficient; it may even be more important than the objective inclusion of stakeholders in the process itself. In others, including one non-state armed group may lead to increased violence by non-participating groups. Alternatively, it may demonstrate the benefits of a negotiated settlement, thus challenging the rationale for violence.

Apart from overcoming process-oriented challenges, there may be a lack of capacity or funds to support *outcome inclusivity*, for example in implementation of peace agreements or state reform. There may also be a lack of genuine political and social will to meaningfully transform the root causes of conflict; agreed mechanisms and/or procedures for implementation may also be absent or could not be agreed upon.

International actors should consider the long-term impact of efforts to support peace processes or provide development aid, both of which entail decisions on inclusivity vs efficiency and elite consensus vs broader buy in and (often in conjunction with other actors' programming) can inadvertently but significantly influence the power balance and overall direction of the process. There is no single blueprint for addressing the dilemmas and challenges regarding inclusivity and participation in peace processes. Planning and sequencing mechanisms for inclusivity is key, and various models may be needed at different stages of the process. Process design should therefore be based on a solid

understanding of the context and conflict dynamics, and the process itself should remain flexible enough to adapt to changes in local conditions.

References and Further Reading

- Clare Castillejo (2014).** *Promoting Inclusion in Political Settlements: A Priority for International Actors?* Oslo: Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre.
- Véronique Dudouet & Stina Lundström (2016).** *Post-war Political Settlements: From Participatory Transition Processes to Inclusive State-building and Governance.* Research Report. Berlin: Berghof Foundation.
- Marike Blunk et al. (2017).** *National Dialogue Handbook: A Guide for Practitioners.* Berlin: Berghof Foundation.
- Katrin Planta (2015).** *Broadening and Deepening Participation in Peace Negotiations: A Strategic Framework.* Berlin: Berghof Foundation.

Online Resources

- Political Settlement Research Programme,** <http://www.politicalsettlements.org/publications-library/>
- Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative,** <http://www.inclusivepeace.org/>
- Inclusive Security,** <https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/>
- Project: Inclusive Political Settlements,** <https://www.berghof-foundation.org/programmes/conflict-transformation-research/completed-projects/inclusive-political-settlements/>