

## STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACEBUILDING:

### *Implementation and Policy*

#### OVERVIEW

In this policy brief, we draw on case studies of civil war to consider how sustainable peacebuilding can be practiced. We take the view that peace agreements mark the beginning, not the end, of a process of national reform and reconciliation in both the institutional and normative spheres. Peace agreements, when properly designed, have the potential to do more for a country than put an end to the immediate violence; they can present a turning point.

The current historical period offers an opportunity to reflect on peacemaking and peacebuilding practices. In recent decades, and in particular after the launch of the UN Agenda for Peace in 1992, there has been a shift from top-down peace interventions towards more inclusive frameworks, in part a response to widespread critiques of the degree to which the peacebuilding paradigm has delivered sustainable peace settlements. Accordingly, policymakers and practitioners have progressively crafted mechanisms that incorporate the expertise, knowledge and experiences of conflict-affected populations into the design of interventions directed towards war-to-peace transition.

Inclusion is now widely believed to be essential to peacemaking, peacebuilding and transitional justice processes and has been adopted by international organizations, national governments and armed actors in the pursuit of sustainable peace. But what does inclusivity mean? In peace processes, inclusive practices broaden the range of actors involved in discussing the provisions of peace agreements and the scope of accountability mechanisms. Talks are not limited to the faces around the negotiating table. Rather, being inclusive requires engaging many different social actors in crafting



#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Since the UN Agenda for Peace, thinking and practice in peacemaking, peacebuilding and transitional justice have aimed to support inclusive mechanisms in order to deliver more sustainable peace settlements.
- Peace agreements represent the beginning—not the end—of a reform and reconciliation process that must be inclusive and participatory throughout its duration.
- Ensuring meaningful inclusivity during the design, implementation, and monitoring phases of peace agreements will reinforce moral legitimacy, representative scope, and resilience, ultimately improving the quality of peace.
- Fostering public buy-in of a peace agreement requires addressing the entrenched motivations and diverse grievances of a range of stakeholders, including those of local communities directly affected by violence and armed groups.
- Sustainable verification, monitoring, and evaluation processes must be built into peace agreements.
- Case studies from Colombia, the Central African Republic, Guatemala, and Northern Ireland provide evidence of what matters to peacebuilding processes, implementation, and policy.

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a peace agreement, observing its implementation, and monitoring programs in coordination with local and community-based actors. The same can be said about the formulation, implementation and monitoring of accountability mechanisms.

Why does inclusivity matter? First, from a moral perspective, we must not exclude those most affected by conflict from discussions about their futures. Second, as regards effectiveness, inclusion brings substantive, insightful perspectives to the negotiating table and to discussions of accountability. Inclusive approaches increase the chances of success, by including perspectives from conflict-affected populations, and by identifying useful mechanisms, beyond traditional concepts of amnesty and processes of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR). Including local and sub-national perspectives may also generate wider legitimacy and foster societal ownership of peace talks, which can strengthen post accord settlement and make them more resilient to recidivism.

## **PEACE AGREEMENTS**

What makes for resilient and sustainable peace agreements? What exemplars might best reveal that peace agreements, while difficult to implement, can succeed? Establishing durable peace requires building for the future, not just responding to the past. Thus, peace agreements must build upon a comprehensive understanding of the causes of conflict to establish strategies for moving forward.

### **Timing of Ceasefires**

For the two years after a peace agreement is signed, its implementation is usually dedicated to provisions related to demilitarization of the rebel organization. Research suggests that signing a peace agreement before the ceasefire has held for at least six months can put the entire process in jeopardy, as ceasefires usually fail several times before they finally hold.<sup>1</sup> Another common cause of recurrence, early on in a peace process is the delayed implementation of amnesty provisions and prisoners' release provisions.<sup>2</sup> While conflict recurrence is often motivated by perceived failures of implementation, by resuming fighting the warring actors further delay implementation. Stakeholders are best to wait at least six months after a ceasefire is put in place before signing the final agreement to reduce the likelihood of a resumption of fighting.

## **Continuity of Leadership**

Some peace processes survive the precarious short-term period, only for violent conflict to resume several years later. These 'mid-term' recurrences are usually associated with low implementation of political and electoral reforms. There is great expectation that these reforms will broaden the electorate and open up the democratic process, and failure to implement these reforms will be perceived as an effort to maintain the illegitimate and exclusionary status quo. Consistency of leadership is needed until all political reforms have been completed. Such continuity creates greater resilience for political reforms to take hold. It is therefore helpful if political leaders who oversee the signing of an agreement are able to stay in power until all political reforms have been completed.

## **Addressing Root Causes**

Agreements that fail to address the embedded causes of conflict lead to poor quality peace and hold the potential for conflict relapse.<sup>3</sup> Understanding and responding to root causes of conflict not only requires the participation of the negotiating parties, but also demands broader input from population groups directly affected by violent conflict. Peacebuilders need to have a grounded understanding of what sparked both the direct and structural violence that undergirded the conflict and the dynamics that are sustaining it and shaping its evolution. Provisions addressing these core issues must be incorporated into the peace agreements and subsequently implemented. Peacebuilders must accordingly engage with all those who played a role in perpetrating violence or were affected by conflict. But how can this be done?

The recent peace process between the Santos administration and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) in Colombia (2012-2016) offers an instructive example.<sup>4</sup> A historical commission made up of six government representatives and six members of the FARC-EP was established to understand the circumstances under which the latter was created. The process offered valuable insights into the role that gender and ethnicity played in the conflict and facilitated the formation of a more resilient agreement. Initiating innovative methods to understand the roots of conflict is particularly salient in the face of atrocities, which are usually the result of, or representative of, long-standing issues entrenched in identity and politics.

To take another example, whilst including significant innovation in terms of the content of the peace agreements and mechanisms for broader inclusion, Guatemala's peace process (1987-1996), failed to engage meaningfully with the specific root cause of conflict (land ownership). Although the process has held, in its aftermath, the peace settlement has been fragile, characterized by ongoing exclusion and cyclical episodes of political and criminal violence.<sup>5</sup>

Strong program development aimed at addressing the causes of conflict must be integrated into the negotiation phase of peace agreements. Implementation data on civil war peace agreements collected by the Peace Accords Matrix project shows that the implementation of provisions designed to address the root causes of conflict often take six to ten years to reach their highest levels of implementation.<sup>6</sup> Low implementation is frequently followed by late conflict recurrence, or even the start of new conflicts.<sup>7</sup> Negotiators must involve the institutions that will implement the programs within the planning stage to strengthen the creation of and respect for targets, timelines, and achievable goals.

### **United Nations Support**

UN peace operations pursue political solutions to conflict and are premised on building political support for a peace agreement or peacebuilding strategy. UN mandates to support peace are most successful when driven by careful analysis and thorough understanding of the specifics in the field, not driven by Security Council debates alone.<sup>8</sup> The UN must also develop strategies to address the potential limitations or fragility of peace agreements. Thus UN mission strategies must develop the tools for effective cross-cutting analysis of the dynamics, stakeholders, and political economy of conflict. Such analysis can inform communication decisions as well as strengthen political support. Clarifying the role that the UN can play will deepen its ability to support the implementation and durability of peace agreements.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND BUY-IN**

There is consensus among peacebuilders and policymakers that including civil society actors meaningfully in the formulation of a peace agreement and in crafting transitional justice mechanisms may reinforce the agreement's sustainability.<sup>9</sup> Civil society actors bring different perspectives, including local and sub-national agendas, to the negotiating table and to discussions over accountability mechanisms.<sup>10</sup> Primarily, inclusivity is a moral imperative; those populations most affected by

violent conflict must not be excluded from discussions about their futures. Inclusion also matters from an efficacy perspective. Fostering broad participation brings alternative perspectives to the negotiating table and to discussions over accountability mechanisms; perspectives that are based on the self-defined needs and demands of conflict-affected populations. Doing so moves discussions beyond the themes often prioritized by negotiating parties (such as amnesty and DDR). Including local and sub-national agendas may also generate wider legitimacy and foster societal ownership of peace talks, which can strengthen post-accord settlement and make them more resilient to recidivism.<sup>11</sup>

How can broad participation be achieved? Who should be included, and by which mechanisms?

### **Direct Participation**

Peacebuilders often miss the opportunity to incorporate, represent and empower civil society actors affected by conflict by taking only tokenistic approaches to their inclusion, approaches that habitually lead to their instrumentalization.<sup>12</sup> Such was the case during the Guatemalan peace process (1987-1996). In a peace process mediated and monitored by the United Nations, the negotiating parties established the so-called Civil Society Assembly (ASC), a consultative group including women's, widows', indigenous and human rights organizations, mandated to send non-binding proposals to the negotiating parties. The participation of the ASC broadened the peace agenda by shaping the content of specific accords, including the indigenous accord and the civilian power accord. However, the non-binding status of the ASC's proposals limited the degree to which the assembly could make meaningful contributions to provisions aimed at addressing the embedded structural causes of violence (land ownership). As such, ASC demands were only included when they aligned with the interests of the negotiating parties, meaning they were ultimately subordinated to more powerful imperatives of the negotiating parties within a neo-liberal logic of the peace negotiations.<sup>13</sup> In this respect, by limiting civil society's access to the process to indirect participation, the commission in fact created a filter through which only select demands reached the negotiating table. In order to reap the complete benefits of civil society inclusion, civil society actors must be mandated with direct participation in formal peace processes, rather than included symbolically at the consultative level. Giving civil society, in particular victims, decision-making power at both the negotiation and implementation stages will also work

toward reshaping dominant power relations which often shape victims' inclusion as a matter of charity.

## **Victim-Centered Transitional Justice**

Policymakers and peacebuilders have recognized the significance of victim inclusion to facilitating better recourse for justice and redress. Integrating victims' demands in the design and implementation of transitional justice mechanisms, both those built into or independent from formal peace agreements, reinforces their legitimacy, representativeness, and effectiveness. Inclusion may also facilitate accountability mechanisms by survivors, offering acknowledgement of victims' grievances.<sup>14</sup>

Inclusion, however, has frequently failed to achieve the potential that such important innovation holds.<sup>15</sup> The cases of Nepal and Northern Ireland suggest that victim-oriented interventions have been linked to the pursuits of governments and policymakers to legitimize top-down peace processes and transitional justice mechanisms. Despite their aspiration to incorporate them at the center of transitional justice mechanisms, some victim-centered initiatives have tended to include victims' demands only as they align with the demands and interests of negotiating parties. In the Northern Ireland case, for instance, during the implementation of the Good Friday agreement (1998-present), victims' demands were made to fit political parties' platforms, often marginalizing the interests of civil society organizations. As a result, victim participation has often led to tokenistic inclusion and to charges of instrumentalization and objectification of subaltern voices.<sup>16</sup> Active engagement with victims must be a long-term and continuous process if peace is to be sustainable.

During the Colombian peace process between the governments of President Juan Manuel Santos and the FARC-EP guerrilla, a formal role was afforded to victims of political violence. In 2014, the negotiating parties mandated 60 victims through the so-called victims' delegations to present their individual testimonies and proposals for Point Five, the Victims' Agreement, at the peace talks in Havana, Cuba.<sup>17</sup> Victim participation directly shaped the content of the provisions for transitional justice within Point Five (truth-telling mechanisms, reparations, justice provisions, provisions for non-repetition), highlighting overlooked patterns of victimization (in particular the causes of violence, sexual and gender-based violence, violence against the LGBTI population, and state-paramilitary collusion). Participation also opened a space for victim – perpetrator dialogue and encounter

in Havana, in turn breaking down the historical wall of perpetrator denial and leading to episodes of conciliation between victims and perpetrators in Havana and de-escalation measures. However, revictimization and retraumatization of delegations also occurred when they returned to Colombia. At the same time, the demands of the delegation participants for land reform and security sector reform were not included in the final accord. As such, the negotiating parties only incorporated the demands of the victims' delegations when they aligned with their own. In this regard, the delegations were unable to wield impact upon transformative measures in socio-economic and security realms. Moreover, by failing to extend engagement with victims beyond their limited participation in Havana, peacemakers and peacebuilders did not guarantee longer term results, rapidly reducing public buy-in and damaging the sustainability of peace. What happened in Havana ostensibly stayed in Havana, as the rejection of the peace package through the 2016 plebiscite and ongoing violence and challenges to the peace agreement have illustrated.

## **Leveraging Existing Practices**

Inviting public participation in peace agreements also requires that public practices and institutions, which are accessible to the population, be mobilized. In developing peace processes, policymakers often establish new institutions to deliver on the provisions of the agreement. These institutions are usually underfunded and their staff inexperienced, while existing local institutions and practices are ignored.<sup>18</sup> Case studies suggest that by reinforcing the strengths of local or community-level institutions and integrating existing practices into peace processes, peace agreements become more sustainable and receive greater buy-in. In the Central African Republic, for example, the Special Criminal Court and Truth and Justice Commission were established in 2015 and 2020, respectively, as formal results of the peace process. Despite significant funding from international donors, the institutions are yet to galvanize or link up with local community-based practices providing justice to individuals.<sup>19</sup>

## **Transnational Inclusion**

Supposedly uniform, national level conflicts are often more than the sum of their parts. National conflicts habitually fought over territorial control, ideological cleavages, and competition for resources manifest their core expression at the micro-level, in local communities and neighborhoods, where the killing and repression take place. However, such conflicts are very often simultaneously driven by transnational factors that might



seem intangible or far away from the everyday violence people suffer. Conflicts are increasingly then taking on a transnational character, as nations engage in proxy wars, private military companies are deployed to support warring parties, resource extraction initiatives drive human rights violations and internal displacement and transnational crime become integrated in patterns of war. Internal armed conflicts often represent a complex configuration of territorial antagonisms and locally-driven conflicts embedded in a nexus linking broader structural tensions, macro-cleavages, and international markets. Peace deals signed in faraway metropolis mean very little here, where repression perpetrated and experienced at the local level is simultaneously driven by and constitutive of national, international, and transnational logics and dynamics (such as drug-trafficking and neo-liberal extractive economics). Under such circumstances, we may not be able to expect peace talks carried out at the national level between representatives of armed parties to resolve conflict sustainably, if broader sets of actors do not participate in some form or wider issues linked to transnational factors are not addressed effectively. Negotiations must engage with the relevant sources of power. It is time to consider how peace negotiations can more effectively and more directly address those transnational factors that shape civil or local conflict. In this regard, talks must include actors linked to informal violent power structures and actors at subnational level, at the same time as engaging formally with international actors and the respective transnational dynamics (criminal or otherwise) driving the violence.

For example, in Colombia, violence perpetrated and conflicts experienced at the local level are habitually embedded in the wider transnational licit economy of resource extraction, as well as the illicit drug economy.<sup>20</sup> Under the current Colombian government of President Gustavo Petro, there is important discussion over how a more heterogeneous approach to conflict transformation might include licit and illicit actors at diverse levels, with the aim of achieving a more sustainable peace settlement.

### **Holding a Referendum**

While holding a referendum can be a powerful tool for establishing public participation in peace agreements, peacebuilders must comprehensively plan how to communicate the strengths of the agreement. It is much easier to argue against an agreement, which may be condemned as a 'sell-out', than it is to promote support for it, which would require explaining the advantages of potentially unsavory compromises. In Northern Ireland, for example, a referendum on the Good Friday Agreement

established support by 71%, despite spoilers associated with both sides of the conflict seeking its rejection. Civil society organizations (CSOs) were instrumental in finding creative ways to foster buy-in by translating the technical parts of the agreement into everyday life examples and informal, easily accessible language.<sup>21</sup>

## **ENGAGED MONITORING**

The monitoring and observation of peace agreements must be rigorous and comprehensive. Most importantly, that process must be built into the agreement from its conception.

### **Independent Monitoring**

That monitors and observers of a peace agreement be independent is critical. In cases where the independence of local or national actors is unachievable, it is widely accepted that international actors are best placed to observe implementation. Their role, however, must be limited to providing observations and information for improving implementation, rather than passing judgement on the failures of political actors alone. For example, the Peace Accords Matrix project has been included as part of the official monitoring mechanism of the Colombian Final Accord and provides continuous information and analysis on the implementation of the commitments of the peace accord. Balance and impartiality, as seen with the Institute and other similar institutions, raise attention to areas requiring improvement and highlight successes made in implementation. Doing so can encourage compliance and effectively counter arguments made by all affected parties – whether agreement signatories or aggrieved communities – of unequal gains and compromises.

### **Coordinated Monitoring**

Where international organizations are involved in monitoring peace agreements, close cooperation with local actors and efforts to empower ongoing monitoring efforts are critical to ensuring a sustainable peace process. For example, The Carter Center engaged in impartial reporting on progress made in Nepal from 2009-2014, following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord in 2006. The Carter Center deployed integrated observer teams, constituting Nepali and international individuals, in the process. The Nepalis established a new CSO (Democracy Resource Center) to continue delivering peacebuilding programs.<sup>22</sup>

Faced with a period of change, peacebuilders have the opportunity to embrace more sustainable processes and

infrastructure. International actors must keep these goals in mind, particularly in allocating funding and resources. Where, traditionally, an international organization would send temporary expertise and provisions at great expense, consideration must be given to investment in local, durable alternatives. For peace agreements to be resilient, evidence shows that peace processes must enable conflict-affected communities to build a stronger future.

## **Inclusive Monitoring**

Inclusion in monitoring the implementation of a peace agreement is critically important. Case studies suggest that including all stakeholders to a peace process in its observation can sustain support for the process. In particular, active efforts must be made to include marginalized groups such as women and youth, as is taking place in Mali and Colombia. Indeed, the monitoring process can present an opportunity to empower these groups and foster public buy-in. In Sudan, The Carter Center has supported the establishment of the Youth Citizen Observer, a network that gathers input from youth and channels their voices into reporting on the peace process and other transitional processes in that country. While instrumental in the 2018-19 overthrow of the former regime, youth were largely excluded from negotiating subsequent agreements, including the Juba Peace Agreement, and the transition's decision-making forums to date.<sup>23</sup>

## **EXPANDING INCLUSION: DILEMMAS**

When pursuing inclusive practices in peacebuilding, policymakers face the challenge of deciding where to draw the line. How is wider participation maintained and the obligations of a peace agreement fulfilled? And are there any actors whose inclusion is either unhelpful or, in fact, not justified? Engaging with Islamic extremists, often termed jihadists, offers a case for reflection.

### **Making Peace with Extremists**

Since the War on Terror, the United States and its allies have pursued countering violent extremism (CVE) agendas that operate along precepts in stark contrast to peacebuilding policies implemented in other conflict settings. Through a process of the anathematization of jihadists and their designation as the most brutal actors in conflict, jihadist groups have been largely excluded from coordinated efforts at peacebuilding. In fact, while CVE agendas have, at times, met marginal success in establishing peace, in other cases they have contributed to the appeal of jihadist groups.<sup>24</sup> Groups such as the

so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), for example, adhered to an anti-systemic narrative that may have been unwittingly reinforced by their exclusion from formal peacebuilding agendas; Islamic State propaganda emphasized the narrative that the group was fighting a monolithic coalition of power-hungry Western nations, hypocritical Middle Eastern rulers, and various 'apostates' from within Muslim communities.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, humanitarian actors such as the International Committee of the Red Cross have criticized the 'global war on terror' as a framework that runs counter to the spirit of international humanitarian law.<sup>26</sup>

Where extremists contribute to conflict, they may also contribute to peace. Before excluding those actors, policymakers and peacebuilders must interrogate what barriers exist to making peace. First, what factors motivated support for the extremist group and drive the conflict, and can they be addressed? Second, what values or practices of the extremist group present too great an obstacle for inclusion? Would inclusion in the peace process in fact work as a tool for reform? Achieving sustainable peace may require giving air to even unsavory voices.<sup>27</sup>

## **Beyond Good Will**

Peacebuilding efforts often operate in environments of disunity and risk. When independent actors, such as international organizations, are unwilling or unable to play punitive roles, agreements can unravel. Peace agreements need effective enforcement mechanisms, including meaningful sanctions. They are best, for example, implemented within a web of reciprocal ties between those who are governing and those who are being governed, with mechanisms where opposing parties can rely on each other in a sustainable way, in the manner of a social contract. For peace agreements and peacebuilding to succeed, political goodwill alone is not sufficient.

## **LEARNING FROM PRACTICE**

A new paradigm to produce sustainable peacebuilding must be created, one that fosters inclusive practices with respect to the range of actors engaging in a peace process and the scope of effective accountability mechanisms. This policy paper draws from concrete case studies to offer six recommendations for policy and practice, in the hope of showing how civil society and government representatives might come together to build sustainable peace.

## CASE STUDIES

### COLOMBIA

In 2016, the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) signed a comprehensive agreement, bringing fifty-two years of conflict to a formal end. The peace process offers useful lessons for victim inclusion mechanisms. In June 2014, the negotiating parties invited 60 victims to each present their testimonies and proposals for the Victim's Agreement to the peace talks in Havana. The 60 victims were selected to reflect emblematic violations perpetrated during the conflict, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), massacres, and disappearances, and also included victims from the different armed groups. Facilitating direct interaction between victims and perpetrators transformed the dynamics of the negotiations, bringing human suffering to the fore. The victims' proposals also directly shaped the content of the accountability mechanisms consecrated in the agreement. However, the delegations did not facilitate longer-term victim inclusion, nor more widespread formal victim-perpetrator encounter, beyond the discrete events in Havana. At the same time, the victims' delegations did not edify a more sustainable peace settlement, nor were they able to engender wider societal buy-in of the peace process, two key justifications for inclusionary processes. During the process of implementation of the peace accord since 2016, the Integral System of Peace (ISP), composed by the Truth Commission (CEV), the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) and the Unit for the Search of the Disappeared (UBPD) continue striving to ensure the centrality of victims in their proceedings, methodologies and results.<sup>28</sup>

### CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR)

Since civil war erupted in 2013, several peace agreements and national dialogues in the CAR have highlighted the centrality of justice and ending impunity to forming sustainable peace. Efforts to provide justice through formal channels, however, have been unsuccessful. In 2015, the centralized authorities established the Special Criminal Court (SCC) and five years later created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Both remain symbolic in practice; the SCC issued its first statement in October 2022 while the TRC is yet to achieve to start its activities. Despite the lack of results, international donors have provided hundreds of thousands of dollars in funding to the bodies. Meanwhile, Central Africans continue to use amicable agreements and traditional justice mechanisms to resolve disputes.<sup>29</sup> These local initiatives are limited and often discriminatory, as they mostly envisage financial compensation between the parties, even for criminal matters. But unlike the recently established transitional justice institutions, they are decentralized, respond at least partially to the demand for justice from Central Africans, and contribute to preventing further conflict.

### GUATEMALA

In December 1996, the government of Guatemala and the guerrilla army the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) signed the Accord for a Firm and Lasting Peace, bringing to an end the country's 36-year armed conflict. The peace process featured unprecedented levels of civil society inclusion, reflecting shifting norms toward inclusion at the UN at the time. In 1994, the Civil Society Assembly (ASC) was established to provide an institutional framework to acknowledge voices and demands from civil society and channel them into the negotiations. Eighty-two CSOs were mandated to send non-binding proposals to the negotiating parties. Analysis shows that the inclusion mechanism increased the legitimacy of the peace agreement and sustained its visibility, making it harder to derail. However, the process failed to account for competing agendas among the CSOs and the dynamics of power that determined which civil society demands would be heard. Several peasant CSOs, demanding land reforms, were sidelined by demands for political and electoral reform, which more closely aligned with the otherwise liberal peace agenda pursued by the negotiating parties. Consequently, the peace agreement failed to address a significant cause of the conflict: grievances over land inequalities. In this respect, more innovative inclusion mechanisms must be crafted.<sup>30</sup>

# NORTHERN IRELAND

In April 1998, an agreement was signed by the British and Irish governments to end the 30 years of violence in Northern Ireland.<sup>31</sup> The Good Friday Agreement, also known as the Belfast Agreement, was also agreed between the Unionists, who wanted Northern Ireland to remain part of the UK, and Nationalists who wanted unification with the Republic of Ireland.<sup>32</sup> The Agreement's provisions focused on constitutional arrangements between Ireland, north and south, and the UK, as well as governance arrangements in Northern Ireland that included power sharing through proportional representation for Unionist (mainly Protestant) and Nationalist (mainly Catholic) groups in both the government and the legislature.<sup>33</sup> Institutional and criminal justice/security sector reforms, the demobilization of armed groups and prisoner releases were also included. However, little attention was given to victims and their rights, including mechanisms for dealing with the past.<sup>34</sup> Aiming to address this gap, specialized inquests and commissions have been created during the implementation of the agreement that engage with cases involving human rights violations and the search for the disappeared. The Stormont House Agreement, published in late 2014, built on those efforts by proposing a series of mechanisms that addressed historical investigations. Nonetheless, none of these efforts have successfully taken a collective and comprehensive perspective on victims' rights, and CSOs have continued to lead the charge in facilitating truth-seeking and reconciliation beyond the institutional frameworks.<sup>35</sup>

**Note:** This policy brief is based on conversations generated during the Colloquium on Strategies for Sustainable Peacebuilding: Implementation and Policy, held on 14-15<sup>th</sup> November 2022 at Yale University.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

- Peacebuilding and transitional justice processes must guarantee the meaningful participation of victimized groups. Thus civil society must actively participate in the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements.
- Inclusion must be fostered across all aspects of the negotiating agenda and be an ongoing commitment both during and after the peace talks.
- National and international institutions must budget for security provisions for those actors who have taken part in formal peacebuilding processes.
- Participation in the formal sphere must be accompanied by and linked to formalized and regulated spaces for victim-perpetrator encounters at local, subnational, and national levels.
- Peacemakers and peacebuilders must seriously consider how drivers of conflict interact at all levels; they must engage with informal, local power structures while addressing transnational dynamics that have nationwide impacts.
- Peace agreements must reinforce the strengths of existing practices and institutions rather than rely on international, temporary tools for implementation.



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