



TRACK I AND GRASSROOTS LEVEL COOPERATION

**Dynamics of public participation
in peace agreements**

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BROADENING PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES

Why?

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Making a negotiation more effective

- The process will involve power groups who exert influence on the civil society
- The grassroots involvement will pressure official/government parties
- The popularity of the process will increase among the public
- The negotiation will contain more points of view, knowledge and competences
- It will turn into reality the citizens' right to participation

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Strengthen the quality and sustainability of the agreement

- The agreement will increase its legitimacy, while enhancing the effective representation of citizens
- With more grassroots involvement, the agenda will cover a broader amount of issues
- The participation of the civil society will serve as a watchdog on public powers

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Is it that easy?

- The parties usually oppose the involvement of other subjects (especially if they can't manipulate grassroots parties)
- The diverse opinions and interests of participants and community groups may be too challenging
- Problems of selecting/excluding participants
- Grassroots level parties may be more easily manipulated and co-opted
- Lack of negotiating skills
- The 3rd party mediator might oppose to increase participation or may have a hard time managing them

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Dynamics of participation



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Dynamics of participation

- **Direct representation** as in the case of National Dialogues (e.g. Yemen, DRC)
- **Observer status**/direct presence during the negotiations (e.g. Liberia, Burundi)
- **Official consultative forums** (e.g. Guatemala, Afghanistan)



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Dynamics of participation

- **Consultations**, without official endorsement (e.g. Kenya). They may occur in any stage of the negotiation process.
- **Post-agreement mechanisms** which involve the participation of grassroots level through the implementation process and institutions (e.g. Somalia, Liberia, DRC, Kenya)
- **High-level civil-society initiatives** (or non-official 'Track 1.5', problem-solving workshop, private facilitation initiatives e.g. Georgian-Abkhaz Schlaining Process)



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Dynamics of participation

- **Public participation**, involving the broader population via public hearings, opinion polls, town hall meetings or signature campaigns (e.g. Northern Ireland, Colombia)
- **Public decision-making**, referenda and other elective forms (e.g. Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Kenya)
- **Mass action**, street demonstrations, rallies, etc. (e.g. Sri Lanka, Nepal).



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Main recommendation for governments

- Fix a **consensual solution** as the objective, as it often brings about a more durable peace
- Look for the **appropriate type of public participation**, depending on the specific features of the peace process and socio-economic situation
- Aim at achieving the **legitimacy** of the peace process
- Post-agreement implementation is **crucial**: some parties' silence may not mean acquiescence, but may be strategic
- Promote **joint learning exercises** between actors involved in peace processes between state and non-state actors.
- Tailor **financial and policy tools** as well as official development assistance to improve linkages between governmental and non-governmental actors involved in different mediation efforts
- **Work actively** with specialised NGOs working in the field of mediation