The Institute for
Inclusive Security

A Program of Hunt Alternatives Fund

Civil society observers, parliamentarians, and the UN gender adviser for the Juba Talks on Northern Uganda.

Strategies for Policymakers

Bringing Women Into Peace Negotiations

About the Series

Strategies for Policymakers condenses a decade of research and direct input from leading peace builders into concise recommendations for ensuring the extensive involvement of women in peace processes. Each guide consists of a set of best practices highlighting policies and programs proven to increase women's participation, as well as stories of countries that have shown these mechanisms better involve women in all stages of the peace-building process.

Contents

Top recommendations

These strategies increase women's participation in peace negotiations. (A complete list of recommendations can be found on page 4.)

1. Establish an advisory group or appoint a dedicated gender adviser in the office of the facilitator or mediator to enhance attention to the different needs and priorities of men and women.

2. Encourage and help create opportunities for women's and other civil society organizations to have continual dialogue with negotiators and decision makers.

3. Guarantee equal funding to negotiators, mediators, and observers—regardless of their gender—for airfare, hotel, meals, and incidental expenses.

4. As an incentive, offer negotiating teams extra seats at the table to be filled by women.

Introduction

As leaders in civil society, particularly during and following violent conflict, women are critical players in peace negotiations. In formal negotiations, they raise often-ignored political and social issues, ensure that the voices of victims and civilians are consistently heard, and build bridges among negotiating parties. They also have a solid record of successfully bringing together representatives of opposing factions in unofficial talks. Yet women remain the largest group of stakeholders regularly excluded from official negotiation processes.

In October 2000, the UN Security Council acknowledged in Resolution 1325 the importance of inclusion, mandating women's full participation in peace building; few policymakers, however, know how to fulfill this obligation. This guide provides the international community with concrete strategies to successfully bring women into peace negotiations.

Making the Case for **Women in Peace Negotiations**

When women are actively involved, peace agreements are more credible and cover a broader range of issues.[1] Their participation widens negotiations beyond topics of military action, power, and wealth sharing, while promoting a noncompetitive negotiating style and building bridges among negotiating parties. Women negotiators help establish positive relationships and steer talks away from zero-sum games over political domination.

Our research shows that the unique insights and concerns women raise during negotiations broaden discussions to incorporate social and humanitarian matters. Improving the conditions of uprooted populations is critical to sustaining peace, yet these concerns often would not be considered if women did not bring them to light. For example, Sudanese women peace builders pushed for the inclusion of humanitarian, social, and economic considerations in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. They underscored the need to attend to the hardships of conflict-affected people, particularly refugees and the displaced. During talks with the Lord's Resistance Army, Ugandan women and civil society shaped the accord to make health and education central in the agreement on disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration; create a compensation fund for victims; and define a "ceasefire" to include halting gender-based violence by combatants.

Women are usually perceived to be more trustworthy and less corruptible, and to favor a noncompetitive negotiating style. This perception allows them to build trust between negotiators and their respective constituencies. At talks in Sri Lanka, women drew on social roles to create a congenial atmosphere in which delegates could talk and generate trust.[2] During the Ugandan negotiations in Juba, US observers noted that women delegates "greased the wheels," facilitating communication among the parties.[3]

Women also prioritize community concerns and communicate decisions made during negotiations to their constituents. In Northern Ireland, women led demands for the creation of a civic forum in which representatives of civil society organizations could provide input into the negotiations and stay updated on the process.[4]

Mediators tend to appreciate women's holistic approach to resolving conflict. The US Agency for International Development representative in El Salvador recalled the "professional" caliber of women negotiators, who came to the talks with a clear "sense of responsibility" and the awareness that "others were depending on them."[5] The women negotiators effectively pressed for the inclusion of female fighters and unarmed opposition supporters in beneficiary lists for land and other resources, preventing a potential crisis among the country's peasant population and possible resumption of conflict.[6]

Numerous international instruments call for the robust inclusion of women in peace talks. In addition to UNSCR 1325 and regional declarations in Africa, Latin America, and Europe, the Platform for Action (adopted by 189 countries in 1995 at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing) states that "the full participation [of women] in decision-making,

Women are usually perceived to be more trustworthy and less corruptible, and to favor a noncompetitive negotiating style.

conflict prevention and resolution and all other peace initiatives [is] essential to the realization of lasting peace." Recommendation E.1 demands that states "increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels."[7]

Best **Practices**

1. The international community can advance women's participation in negotiations by emphasizing the importance of their inclusion to delegates involved in talks.

2. Gender-awareness training for male and female negotiators can enhance awareness of and attention to the varied priorities and needs of men and women.

3. Identifying strategic entry points for women's inclusion at the beginning of the process can increase their access to negotiations.

4. Introducing positive incentives for including women on negotiating teams can encourage their selection.

5. Peace processes designed to facilitate input from civil society can help enable women's engagement in negotiations.

6. Using participatory processes to select delegates to peace talks can increase the likelihood women will be present during negotiations.

7. Women's participation in talks can often be constrained by obligations to family members; providing financial and logistical support can help enable women's active involvement.

8. Ensuring security for women decreases their vulnerability and can facilitate their involvement in peace processes.

9. Consultation with local gender-expert teams during negotiations can promote the interests of women.

10. Women are more likely to gain access to talks and influence the peace agreement when a neutral facilitator helps them develop a common agenda.

How to Bring Women **Into Peace Negotiations**

Using Policies

1. Establish an advisory group or appoint a dedicated gender adviser in the office of the facilitator or mediator to enhance attention to the different needs and priorities of men and women.

2. As an incentive, offer negotiating teams extra seats at the table to be filled by women.

3. In letters of invitation to negotiations, require or at least encourage negotiating, observer, and mediation teams to include at least one-third women.

4. Create structures for negotiation that allow groups underrepresented at formal talks to communicate with negotiators and mediators.

Luz Méndez, the only woman on the URNG negotiating team in Guatemala.

Leveling the Playing Field

1. Guarantee equal funding to negotiators, mediators, and observers—regardless of their gender—for airfare, hotel, meals, and incidental expenses.

2. Provide funding, space, and facilitation to women from the various negotiating teams to meet separately from the broader group to determine and strategize shared priorities.

3. Fund child care to help women selected to participate in negotiations attend all sessions.

4. Provide physical protection to women delegates throughout negotiations.

Empowering Women's Groups

1. Encourage and help create opportunities for women's and other civil society organizations to have continual dialogue with negotiators and decision makers.

2. Offer technical support to women's organizations and women peace activists to enable them to identify and take advantage of opportunities to access peace talks and those involved in talks.

3. Help diverse groups of women form coalitions with broad constituencies to create common platforms of interest that they can present to negotiators, mediators, and observers.

4. Solicit position papers from women's and other civil society groups on negotiation topics and set aside time on the agenda for negotiating teams to discuss civil society inputs.

Example One: **Guatemala**

In 1996, Guatemala ended a 36-year civil war that claimed 200,000 lives—the vast majority civilians.[1] Violence peaked in the 1970s and 1980s, with assaults on mostly Mayan communities. Women were a large percentage of the dead, disappeared, widowed, and victimized.[2]

In 1991, the Guatemalan government began negotiations with the insurgents, who had formed the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG).[3] After stalling in 1993, talks resumed in Mexico in May 1994, under a new, more inclusive structure and UN sponsorship.[4] Between 1994 and 1996, the Guatemalan government and URNG successfully negotiated 11 peace agreements, resulting in a permanent ceasefire in 1996.

Women significantly influenced the talks. Though only two women directly participated in the formal peace negotiations, one was particularly active in ensuring that women's needs were included in the accords. Women civil society leaders in the Assembly of Civil Society (ACS) made sure that gender-sensitive proposals were presented at the negotiating table, thus promoting a more broadly inclusive process. The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in September 1995 in Beijing and attended by one of the women negotiators, also underscored the importance of women's inclusion and influenced those involved in the negotiations.

Mechanisms for promoting women's inclusion

The structure for negotiations (see Figure 1) that emerged in 1994 gave civil society a (non-binding) voice in the talks. In response to external pressure for broadened participation in the negotiations, the 1994 Framework Accord for the Resumption of Negotiations established the ACS under the leadership of Episcopalian Bishop Rodolfo Quezada Toruño.

The ACS built directly on the new but well-organized civil society movement and envisioned six sector dialogues: political parties, business groups, religious groups, trade unions, academics, and indigenous peoples. Further lobbying expanded the number of sectors to 11, adding other non-governmental development organizations, research centers, human rights groups, media organizations, and women's organizations. These sector groups developed stances for ACS-wide consideration and presentation at the talks in Mexico. Though the ACS did not have a seat in the formal negotiations, Monsignor Quezada Toruño regularly presented ACS proposals to negotiators. Civil society had considerable impact: negotiators directly adopted most ACS recommendations, though they ignored many of those related to socioeconomic and agrarian reforms, particularly land redistribution.[5]

Security and protection: The presence of the UN Mission for the Verification of Human Rights decreased the vulnerability of social organizations, facilitating their involvement in the peace process. In addition, Peace Brigades International (PBI) offered unarmed international protection for Guatemalan individuals, organizations, and communities. Specifically, PBI provided safe passage for women to participate in conferences, meetings with policymakers, and demonstrations to push for inclusion in the peace process.[6]

Through their efforts in the Assembly of Civil Society, women negotiators made sure that gender-sensitive proposals were presented at the negotiating table, thus promoting a more broadly inclusive process.
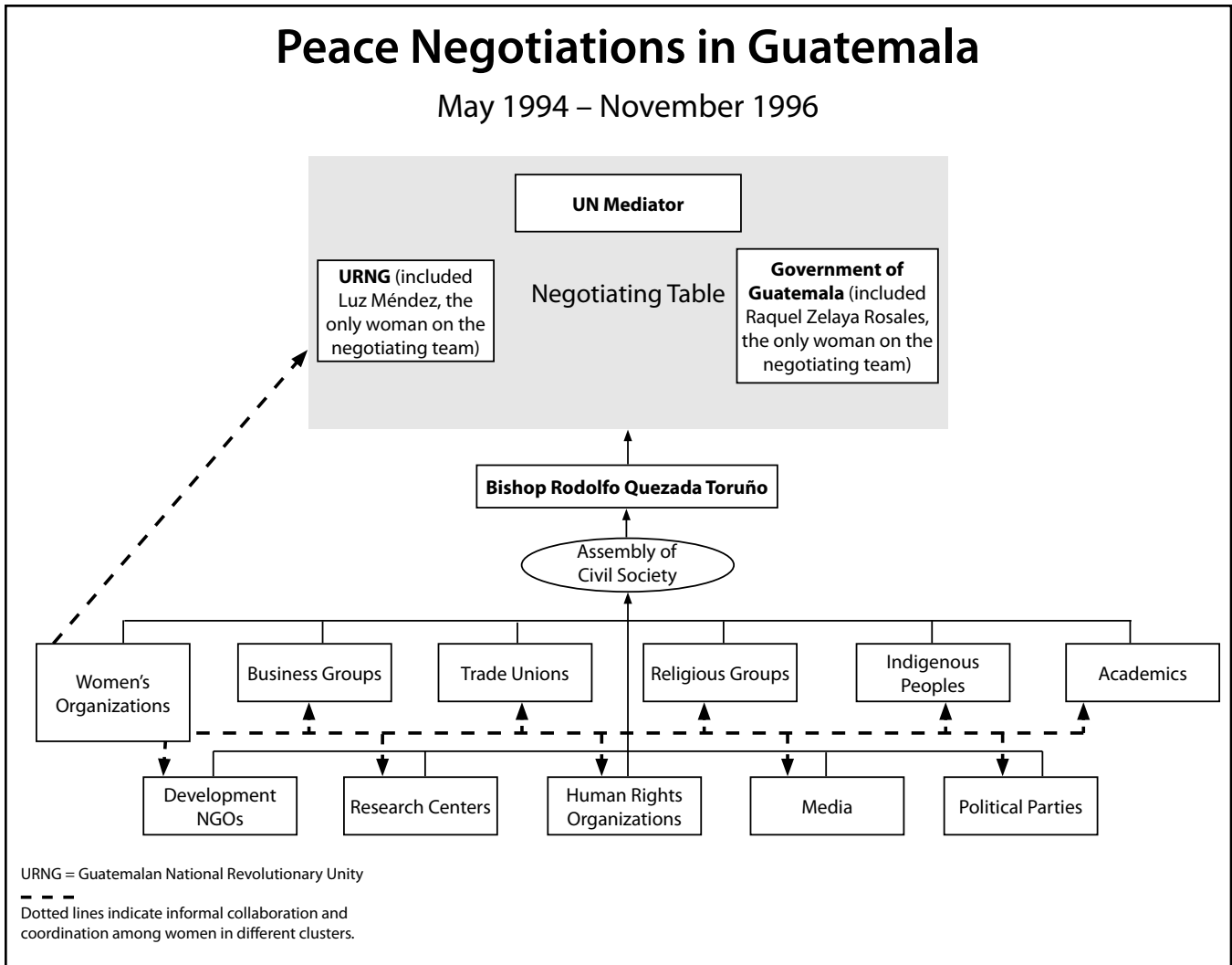
Peace Negotiations in Guatemala

May 1994 – November 1996

UN Mediator

Negotiating Table

URNG (included Luz Méndez, the only woman on the negotiating team)

Government of Guatemala (included Raquel Zelaya Rosales, the only woman on the negotiating team)

Bishop Rodolfo Quezada Toruño

Assembly of Civil Society

Women's Organizations

Business Groups

Trade Unions

Religious Groups

Indigenous Peoples

Academics

Development NGOs

Research Centers

Human Rights Organizations

Media

Political Parties

URNG = Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity

Dotted lines indicate informal collaboration and coordination among women in different clusters.

Figure 1.

Logistical and technical assistance: The UN and national governments enhanced civil society involvement in the peace process through direct support to individual groups and indirectly through the ACS. Member governments of the Group of Friends—Colombia, Mexico, Norway, Spain, the United States, and Venezuela—supported the ACS with salaries, travel, and other logistical assistance, enabling ACS leaders to devote themselves fully to the negotiations. ACS leaders, including women, received training. At one point, the Mexican government sent its presidential plane to bring 22 ACS representatives to the talks.[7] Spain provided safe haven at its embassy facilities in Mexico and El Salvador for URNG leaders to hear recommendations directly from ACS representatives.

Long-term support of the international community: Continued support further enabled women to influence governance and the political process. For example, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees helped Guatemalan women obtain identity documents to register as voters, civil society representatives, and political candidates.[8]

Women co-organized national and international consultations to determine which additional sectors needed representation.

Women's influence on the process

The women's sector played an important role in shaping the ACS, pushing to broaden the assembly to include additional sectors; they co-organized national and international consultations to determine which additional sectors needed representation.[9]

The women's sector also effectively advanced its agenda within the ACS. This sector included 32 women's groups representing trade unions, academia, feminists, human rights activists, and indigenous peoples;[10] it broadened its reach and mainstreamed its agenda by creating alliances with women who had varied political and ideological views in other ACS sector groups. Despite women's initial marginalization, policy documents from the women's sector became central in overall ACS discussions and promoted tolerance.[11]

Women also had important impact on the formal negotiations, engendering the accord and bringing important issues to the dialogue. They did so in partnership with two key players: Luz Méndez and Jean Arnault. Méndez, the only woman on the URNG negotiating team, attended the Fourth World Conference on Women during the negotiations. Thus made more aware of gender discrimination, she became a voice for civil society as she worked to ensure that the peace agreements incorporated proposals made by the ACS women's movement. Ms. Méndez states, "While I was sensitive to women's issues, the ACS provided me with concrete recommendations to present at the negotiations," enabling her to "contribute to the incorporation of specific commitments for women's equity in the accords."[12] In the case of negotiations, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Guatemala and mediator of the talks, Jean Arnault, became increasingly attuned to women's issues. He endorsed the inclusion of women's concerns, facilitating consideration of related ACS recommendations.[13]

Benefits of women's participation

For the broader accord

- **Increased transparency and participation.** Women advocated for a broadly participatory process to select sectors for dialogues. Separately, they proposed and organized consultations that gave voice to displaced men and women.[14]
- **Discussion of key human rights issues.** Women proposed discussions on the balance between police and civilian power, labor rights (specifically maximum working hours), and indigenous rights.
- **More tolerance and dialogue among negotiators.** In partnership with the Ecumenical Council of Churches, women helped lead efforts to reconcile and finalize ACS proposals.[15]

For women and women's rights

- **Specific language calling for women's equality.** The agreements include demands for "equitable participation by all citizens, both men and women, on the basis of complete political and ideological pluralism." Five of the 11 peace agreements that make up the official peace accord call for the recognition and protection of Guatemalan women's rights.[16]

Women's participation in the negotiations had a decisive impact on the treatment of women in the peace agreements.

- **Commitment to providing women with equal opportunities.** The official accords call for equal access to education, credit, housing, health services, and justice, as well as to enhanced legal protections and political participation.[17]

- **Institutionalization of women's participation in implementation of agreements.** In addition to creating the National Women's Forum (a body of 250 women from across 24 linguistic groups to implement and help monitor programs established by the accords),[18] the accords outline specific steps to increase the role and participation of women in "the exercise of civilian power."[19]

Opportunities for improvement

- **Increase women's direct participation in the negotiations.** Each of the formal negotiating teams included only one woman. Mediators can mandate that a share of the negotiating teams be women; once the requisite numbers are present, the opportunity must be created for women to meet separately from men and to connect with women civil society representatives.

- **Commit to women's representation up front.** An ACS women's sector was added only after intense lobbying. Women were a small minority of those in the other sector groups. Negotiations must be structured from the outset to guarantee that women can convey their views and priorities.

- **Ensure that the participation of civil society and women is used to aid consolidation of peace.** Though the ACS was an effective vehicle for obtaining input from civil society, the National Women's Forum was one of the ACS's few lasting legacies. The ACS could have been used to involve civil society in reconstruction, but it was dissolved in 1996. To realize positive longer-term outcomes, women and civil society representatives to the negotiations must participate in assessing needs, promoting reconciliation, raising grassroots awareness of peace agreements, and delivering local services to assist rebuilding.

- **Maintain an ongoing dialogue between civil society and its representatives throughout negotiations.** While the ACS helped move political forces beyond the two parties of the conflict, it did not build ownership throughout the entire population. As a result, in 1999, Guatemalan voters rejected a constitutional reform designed to reduce the power of the military and improve the legal status of the indigenous population. Connections with civil society must be made up front to ensure that the interests of all stakeholders are addressed and that final agreements have broad support among the people.

Example Two: **Darfur, Sudan**

With the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Sudan's leaders formally ended a 21-year civil war between the north and south.[1] Conflict in Darfur, however, continued. Since 2003, some estimate that over 300,000 people have died and as many as 2.7 million have been displaced;[2] about 300,000 have fled to Chad.[3]

The Inter-Sudanese Peace Talks on Darfur, organized by the African Union (AU), began in July 2004 in N'Djamena, Chad and moved to Abuja, Nigeria at the beginning of the second round.[4] The talks brought together the Government of Sudan, the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A), and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM).[5] Despite several rounds of peace talks and an AU protection force of 7,000 in Sudan, violence and broken ceasefires continued in 2004 and 2005.[6]

While the government negotiating team included two women from early rounds on,[7] the number of women in formal delegations and acting as advisers increased markedly between the sixth and seventh rounds of talks. By the end of November 2005, when the seventh round began,[8] all parties included women in their official negotiating and preparatory workshops.[9] A neutral Gender Expert Support Team (GEST) and an AU gender adviser also began to contribute in the seventh round.[10]

The seventh round ended on May 5, 2006 when the Sudan Liberation Army faction led by Minni Minawi and the Government of National Unity signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA).[11] The SLM/A-Abdul Wahid

The Darfur Peace Agreement stands as one of the most gender-sensitive peace agreements yet created; women's contribution to its creation and its gender provisions offer numerous lessons for improving women's participation in negotiations.
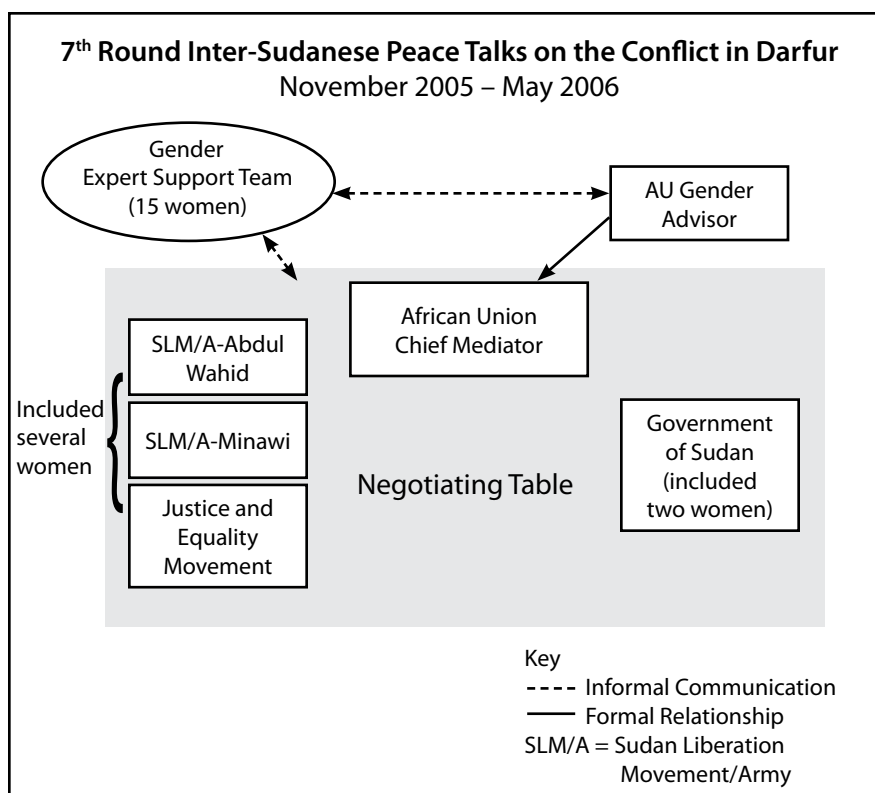

Figure 2.

and the JEM refused to sign,[12] and the agreement failed to resolve conflict in Darfur.[13] Nonetheless, the DPA stands as one of the most gender-sensitive peace agreements yet created; women's contribution to its creation and its gender provisions offer numerous lessons for improving women's participation in negotiations.

Mechanisms for promoting women's inclusion

The most effective promoters of women's participation in the seventh round of negotiations were the international community and the Gender Expert Support Team—which acted as a technical resource to the women on the formal negotiating teams and brought the voice of women in civil society to the talks (see Figure 2).

The GEST was a nonpartisan group of 15 Darfurian women[14] comprising highly educated professionals and grassroots women from the three states of Darfur. With semi-official status, although they were neither delegates nor observers, members of the GEST provided counsel for the delegates, the AU mediation team, and other partners.[15]

Mediator support: His Excellency Salim Salim, chief mediator for the negotiations beginning with the fifth round,[16] publicly appealed at the end of the sixth round for increased participation of women in delegations.[17] He also gave access to the GEST and helped elevate the views of women during deliberations.

Advocacy: Advocacy by the international community and Darfurian women civil society leaders enabled the GEST to participate in the seventh round of peace talks. They received vocal support from Canadian Senator Mobina Jaffer; UN Political Affairs Officer Primrose Oteng;[18] the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM); and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). UNIFEM also lobbied the AU gender team to bring senior gender advisers to the talks.[19]

Logistical aid: UNIFEM in Nairobi helped coordinate travel and accommodation and developed terms of reference for the GEST in collaboration with the AU Mediation Commission and the IDRC. The AU provided meeting space for the GEST.[20]

Financial backing: The government of Canada funded the GEST through contributions to UNIFEM.[21] UNIFEM in Nairobi, with financial support from the Swedish and Canadian governments, also arranged for some additional Darfurian women to travel to Abuja to attend the peace talks.[22] [23]

External technical assistance: Canada supported Darfurian women as they prepared to participate in negotiations.[24] UNIFEM-Khartoum worked with Sudanese civil society organizations, including the Community Development Association, to identify Darfurian women to participate in the talks.[25] Senator Jaffer helped women develop strategies to lobby within their delegations.[26]

Holding closed meetings separate from the formal negotiations, the GEST worked with women on the wealth-sharing, power-sharing, and security

arrangements commissions to identify gender issues and to ensure gender sensitivity during the negotiations.[27] Dr. Mary Maboreke, a senior adviser on gender issues for the AU Mission in Sudan, joined the mediation team at the beginning of the seventh round[28] and, in collaboration with the UNIFEM regional director Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda, connected members of the GEST with women on each negotiating team.[29] When the GEST departed, UNIFEM added a gender adviser, Mary Mbeo, to continue advocating for attention to gender and the priorities identified by the GEST.[30]

Women's influence on the process

Women significantly shaped the final round of the negotiations and the DPA. Women on the formal negotiating teams participated in all three official commissions—wealth sharing, power sharing, and security arrangements.[31] The GEST successfully advocated for attention to property ownership, economic empowerment, and human rights issues that negotiating parties previously neglected.[32]

Benefits of women's participation

For the broader accord

- **Need for protection and security for internally displaced persons and refugees highlighted.** Women successfully pushed for the DPA to include protection and security for internally displaced persons and refugees.

- **Achievement of peace rather than power emphasized.** Women in Abuja who planned to return to Darfur seemed more motivated than some of the men who planned to live elsewhere after the talks. According to one observer, "The women were just there to achieve peace. They had not come there with the idea that they would be in the next cabinet."[33] Regardless of their differences, the women from all parties and the gender experts acknowledged commonalities and committed to work together to advocate for peace.

- **Tensions among parties eased.** The undercurrent of unity created by the GEST helped establish trust among the parties and ease some tension among the negotiators.[34] Many, including Senator Jaffer, claim that women shifted the dynamic at the peace table. They raised previously neglected issues that all the parties could agree on, such as food security; these issues effectively served as confidence-building measures.[35]

For women and women's rights

- **Priorities for women documented and included in the DPA.** Women managed to outline common priorities within each of the wealth-sharing, power-sharing, and security arrangements commissions.[36] On March 8, 2006, International Women's Day, the women delegates issued a joint statement on Darfurian women's priorities for peace and reconstruction.[37] The DPA incorporated most of those priorities and called for the participation of women in decision-making bodies during reconstruction, improved mechanisms for dealing with gender-based violence, and special attention to peace-building issues that affect women.[38] Forty-nine of 515 provisions, and 16 of 33 articles, referenced "women," "gender," or "girls."[39]

On March 8, 2006, International Women's Day, the women delegates issued a joint statement on Darfurian women's priorities for peace and reconstruction. The Darfur Peace Agreement incorporated most of those priorities.

- **Women's participation in wealth sharing addressed.** Women secured their inclusion in wealth sharing, arguing that national wealth belongs to all citizens, regardless of gender or age.[40] The DPA acknowledged the need for special focus on providing concrete measures to address the concerns of women, as well as ensuring their equal and effective participation in various decision-making bodies during reconstruction.[41]

- **Protection of women's role in peace building advanced.** UNIFEM was encouraged by the outcome of the peace agreement and followed it by designing a program on "Protecting and Promoting Women's Role in Peace Building and Recovery." The program was implemented in July 2007 in all three states of Darfur.[42]

- **Gender considerations highlighted in negotiations.** The GEST interacted directly with all official women delegates to develop a common position paper, "Women's Priorities in the Peace Process and Reconstruction in Darfur,"[43] that reflected the needs and concerns of women.[44] On December 30, 2005, Darfurian women presented the document to a special plenary of the negotiations[45] attended by the AU Special Envoy and Chief Mediator, the negotiating parties, and representatives of the UN and other international partners.[46] This document supported the inclusion of gender issues in the peace talks, and included provisions for wealth-sharing and land rights; affirmative action; physical security; women's participation in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR); compensation and reparations for women and children; and a gender-responsive reconciliation commission.[47] HE Salim Salim urged the delegates to consider the priorities in their discussions and positions.[48] The document was adopted that day.[49]

- **Awareness of security concerns for women and children increased.** Women GEST members stressed that women and children were the primary victims of the deteriorating security situation.[50] The agreement called on relevant authorities to protect displaced women from harassment, exploitation, and gender-based violence.[51]

Opportunities for improvement

- **Commit up front to women's participation**. By the seventh round, men had already defined priority issues; it was difficult to integrate women and women's priorities into the already-established structure of the discussions.[52] To ensure that gender issues are addressed, women need to be present in the initial stages.

- **Create incentives for negotiating teams to include more women on the formal teams.** Even during the seventh round, though many women traveled from Darfur and Khartoum to participate in various capacities, relatively few women sat on the formal teams. One account suggests that only about eight percent of delegates in the negotiating teams were female.[53] No woman on the government negotiating team participated in the security arrangements commission.[54] The government team included two women and the SLM/A-JEM teams included a number that varied between six and ten over time.[55]

- **Use specificity in accords to guarantee women a role implementing peace agreements.** The May 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement does not guarantee women's participation in the implementation of the agreement.[56] While

The Gender Expert Support Team interacted directly with all official women delegates to develop a common position paper, "Women's Priorities in the Peace Process and Reconstruction in Darfur."

there is a great deal of language supporting women's participation, there are no specific targets or quotas for women's representation in decision-making bodies or security structures and no mechanisms to monitor gender-based violence.[57] Women continue to be under-represented at national and local levels, and even stated commitments to their participation in formal government structures have not been fulfilled.[58]

- **Give gender expert technical teams more access so that they can be a greater resource.** While the GEST arrived in Abuja early in the seventh round—on December 10, 2005—it stayed only 20 days of a multi-month process.[59] With no formal mechanism for gender advisers to understand what transpires in formal sessions, they are limited in their ability to act as resources.[60] Greater interaction with male members of official delegations would increase their ability to keep current with the negotiations and to influence the proceedings.[61]

- **Create more formal opportunities for women to caucus within and across parties during negotiations.** At least one observer believed that informal interactions (such as lunches) among women outside the formal negotiations process did not provide enough opportunity to develop an agenda common to all sides.[62]

- **Provide security to women to ensure their participation in the negotiations**. Women delegates faced different security threats than male delegates, including physical threats and threats to their families. On December 15, 2005, the home of a GEST member was blown up in Darfur, injuring a family member.[63] It is necessary to provide female delegates with not only a safe space at the negotiation site, but also protection when they return home during and after negotiations.[64]

- **Offer specialized logistical support to women delegates.** The location of the Darfur Peace Talks presented a barrier to women's participation. Traveling to the talks meant women had to find alternative care for their families, a task made more difficult by ongoing conflict.

- **Engage the media to highlight the importance of women's participation.** Educating all parties (formal delegation members, mediators, international partners, and the public) as to the importance of women's concerns and their involvement can increase the number of women involved.

On December 15, 2005, the home of a GEST member was blown up in Darfur, injuring a family member.

Example Three: **Northern Ireland**

After decades of violence, the process for all-party talks in 1997 offered Northern Ireland its best hope yet for lasting peace. These talks were the first to include women as well as mainstream parties and political representatives. The comprehensive nature of the talks was essential to the signing of the Good Friday (or Belfast) Agreement on April 10, 1998, which ultimately ended the conflict in Northern Ireland. Women's input greatly influenced the Agreement.

Women delegates brought unique perspectives to the negotiating table. They advocated to find common ground and promoted a noncompetitive negotiating style. As impartial delegates, women served as facilitators and bridged

communication gaps between rival political parties. Women ensured the introduction into the peace agreement of social and economic issues that other parties neglected, such as integrated education, social inclusion, and community development.

Mechanisms for promoting women's inclusion

The structure established for negotiations in 1996 opened a door for civil society. To secure the participation of political parties linked to paramilitary groups, the British government developed an electoral system for admission to the all-party talks. Designed as a two-tier process, the system comprised the 110-member Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue (Peace Forum), a new temporary institution designed to play a consultative role; and a 20-member negotiating table (see Figures 3 and 4).[1]

Guidelines created by the British government allowed political parties to win seats at the Forum based on relatively few votes. Delegates were elected from 18 electoral districts, with 5 seats allotted per district. Voters within each district selected one of several closed-party lists. The remaining 20 at-large seats were allocated to the 10 parties that received the most votes overall. Each party elected to the Peace Forum designated two representatives to the negotiating table. Parties with many delegates in the Forum most often appointed their party leaders to the negotiating table. Parties with fewer elected members had the same members representing them at the Peace Forum and the negotiating table.[2]

This unique process unintentionally provided women an opportunity to sit at the negotiating table, which women activists in Northern Ireland seized. Over six weeks, Monica McWilliams (now chief commissioner at the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission) and May Blood (now a member of the British House of Lords) led a successful effort to gather 10,000 signatures needed to form the cross-community Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC),[3] a political party that united women from the Protestant and Catholic communities under a common platform. The NWIC received votes sufficient to obtain two at-large seats.

International pressure and support: Highly visible US political leaders such as First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, US Ambassador to Ireland Jean Ken-

The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition secured language on victims' rights in the agreement, and argued that young people required particular attention.

Electoral System to Select Negotiators

90 seats (18 districts with 5 seats per district)	**+**	**20 seats** (Top 10 parties each received 2 extra seats)	**=**	**110 peace forum delegates**

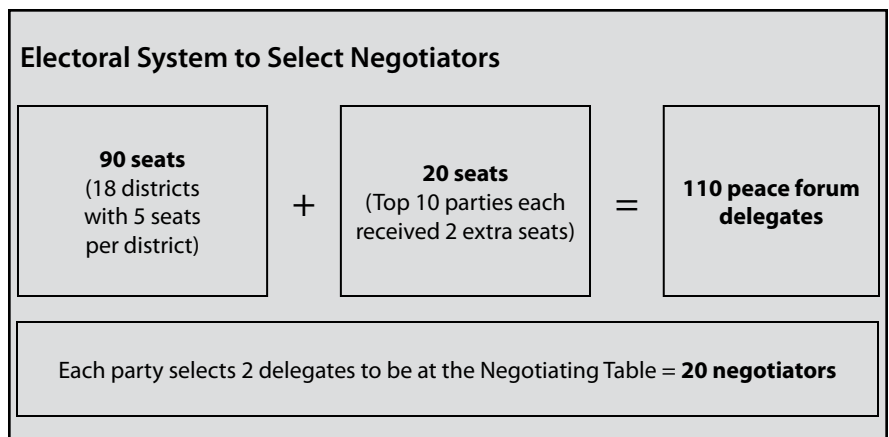Each party selects 2 delegates to be at the Negotiating Table = **20 negotiators**

Figure 3.

nedy-Smith, and US Senator Edward Kennedy[4] drew the attention of the international media and attracted support for the role of women in Northern Ireland.[5] As co-chair (with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright) of Vital Voices, an NGO that identifies, trains, and empowers emerging women leaders and social entrepreneurs around the globe, Clinton visited Northern Ireland in 1995 to help find a solution to the sectarian violence.[6] She publicly endorsed the role of women in the peace talks.

Assistance from civil society: The NIWC also received support from other parts of society. Women's organizations and networks provided meeting places and held conferences and training events attended by NIWC members. In 1998, Vital Voices hosted the Women in Democracy conference in Belfast, Ireland, which brought together 400 women to establish and expand relationships, and secure resources.[7] As a result of the conference, numerous businesses, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations built partnerships to support women in Northern Ireland and their hopes for a peaceful future.[8] A community college provided the NIWC with meeting space. People with political experience helped draft documents with language and structure familiar to policymakers. Several individuals made financial donations to help pay campaign costs.[9]

Government financial aid: To enable equitable participation during the talks, the British Government gave allowances to the representatives engaged in the peace talks, including the NIWC, and provided them with office space in Stormont, seat of the all-party negotiations. However, to be closer to its constituents, the NIWC used its party allowance to establish an office outside Stormont.[10] To support the women directly participating in negotiations, the party also established a "talks team" of a dozen women who met a few times a week to discuss their approach on certain issues.[11]

Women's influence on the process

The NIWC played an important role in shaping the peace agreement. Party members brought health and social issues to the forefront of the agenda. They broadened the talks to include topics of interest to marginalized groups other than women and fought for recognition of the rights and needs of victims of violence.[12] NIWC delegates applied principles of inclusion, equality, and respect for human rights when developing positions and argued that a workable solution needed to be based on values and common ground, not fixed positions. They also had an important impact on the formal negotiations; by remaining impartial, the women built trust and broke down communication barriers. The NIWC delegates established close relationships with other parties, particularly the Progressive Unionist Party, Labour Coalition, and Ulster Democratic Party.[13] As a result of its influence and approach, the NIWC had more of its issues and proposals included in the final document than any other party.[14]

Benefits of women's participation

For the broader accord

- **Bridges built among negotiating parties.** Using their access to full effect, the NIWC delegates served as facilitators for the negotiations,

Composition of the Peace Forum

Labour
2 Seats

Northern Ireland Women's Coalition
2 Seats

Ulster Democratic Party
2 Seats

Progressive Unionist Party
2 Seats

United Kingdom Unionist Party
3 Seats

Alliance Party
7 Seats

Sinn Féin
17 Seats

Social Democratic and Labor Party
21 Seats

Democratic Unionist Party
24 Seats

Ulster Unionist Party
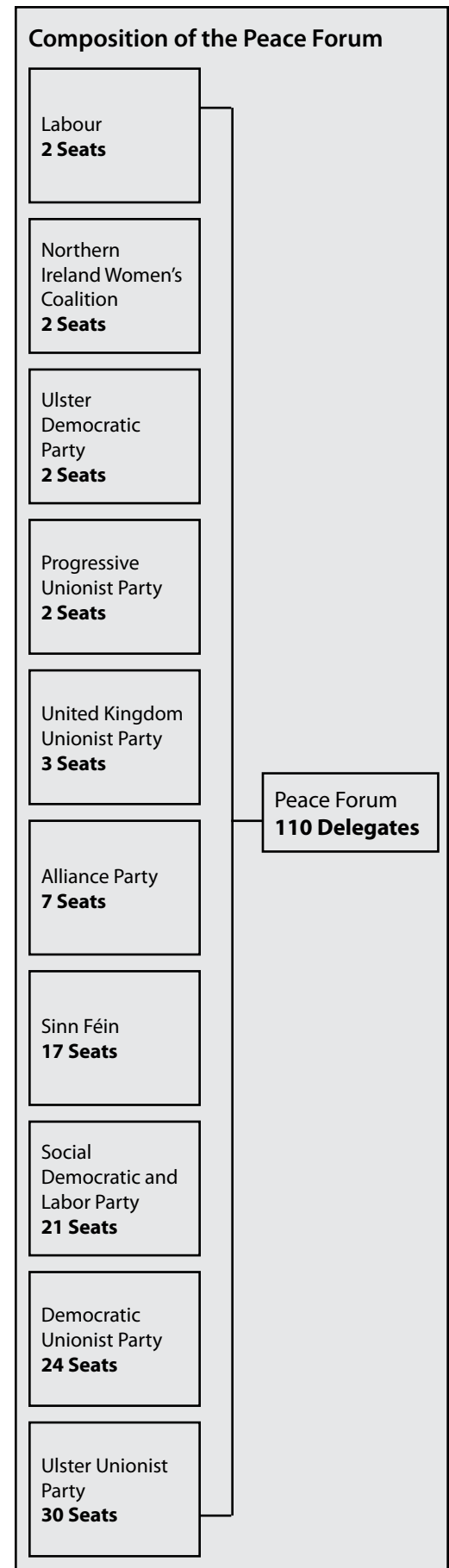**30 Seats**

Peace Forum
110 Delegates

Figure 4.

encouraged political opponents to work together, and promoted novel solutions as well as consensus building.

- **Increased awareness of prisoners' rights.** The NIWC successfully pushed for the agreement to include accelerated release and reintegration of political prisoners.

- **Emphasis on victims and youth in reconciliation.** The NIWC secured language on victims' rights in the agreement, and argued that young people required particular attention. The agreement acknowledged that addressing the suffering of victims was a necessary element of reconciliation and committed to supporting development of special community-based initiatives to help young victims of violence.

- **Promotion of social goals, including integrated education and mixed housing.** During the peace talks, the NIWC argued for safer communities and ensured that the agreement included provisions for the support of integrated education and mixed housing.[15]

- **More comprehensive dialogue.** The NIWC proposed a Civic Forum to ensure that the inclusive process continued beyond the negotiations. Comprising business, trade unions, and other civic sectors, the Forum was created to consult with the new Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly on economic, social, and cultural issues.

For women and women's rights

- **Protection of women's political rights.** The agreement's human rights section included a clause calling for "...the right of women to full and equal political participation." (The agreement failed, however, to include specific mechanisms—such as quotas—guaranteeing this right.)[16]

Opportunities for improvement

- **Ensure a critical mass of women participate directly in negotiations.** Other delegations present at the all-party talks were initially exclusively male; the NIWC delegation was exclusively female. The 18/2 balance meant that male voices were heard more frequently during the negotiations.[17]

- **Commit to civil society representation up front.** Although the format developed for the all-party talks enabled delegates outside the mainstream parties to participate, organizers of the talks made no specific arrangements for the participation of other organized sectors of society.[18]

- **Provide child care, travel, and protection to female delegates to ensure their presence at negotiations.** The NIWC was not provided with a child care allowance; unlike other parties it often lacked a researcher, speechwriters, and other important support staff to aid its deliberations and contributions.[19]

Example Four: **Sri Lanka**

Though violent conflict between the government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE) concluded militarily in 2009, peace talks in 2002 and 2003 attempted diplomatic resolution. These talks did not end the conflict in Sri Lanka, but they stand out for providing an entry point for women's inclusion in the broader peace process. Working through the all-female Subcommittee on Gender Issues (SGI), women pushed for their participation and for attention to common issues of concern in all stages of negotiations and reconstruction. Though the SGI was not directly represented at the negotiating table, it brought women's priorities to the forefront of the negotiations agenda and highlighted civilian needs, such as freedom of information.

Mechanisms for promoting women's inclusion

Initially, there were three Subcommittees: Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs in the North and East; De-escalation and Normalization; and Political Matters. Although there was agreement in principle that women needed to be included in the talks, only after receiving external pressure for broadened participation did leaders on both sides of the table decide to create the SGI (see Figure 5).[1]

The subcommittee provided a unique opportunity within the structure of the negotiations for five women from each side of the conflict to interact with women from the other side.[2] The government chose its subcommittee nominees from a list of civil society leaders compiled by national women's organizations; the LTTE appointed five high-level women from its own cadres in the north and east.[3] The Government of Norway appointed Dr. Astrid N. Heiberg as gender adviser to the SGI and provided financial resources to the subcommittee.[4] Dr. Heiberg organized SGI meetings and facilitated discussions.[5]

The SGI was the only subcommittee given the freedom to formulate its own terms of reference.[7] Members decided to focus on seven topics: sustaining the peace process; resettlement; personal security and safety; infrastructure and service; livelihood and employment; political representation and decision making; and reconciliation. For each area of concern, members identified specific issues to address.

Advocacy by domestic women's groups: Prior to the establishment of the SGI, several Sri Lankan women's groups had committed themselves to identifying and discussing the needs of people on the ground. With women from their international networks, they formed a coalition to undertake a fact-finding mission in conflict-affected areas of the country. Based on priorities and needs identified in the field, the coalition recommended that all advisory committees to the peace process comprise at least 30 percent women.[7] It also emphasized the need to gain support of key decision makers to ensure women had political space during and after the peace process. The coalition documented and summarized the findings of its missions in an 11-page report.
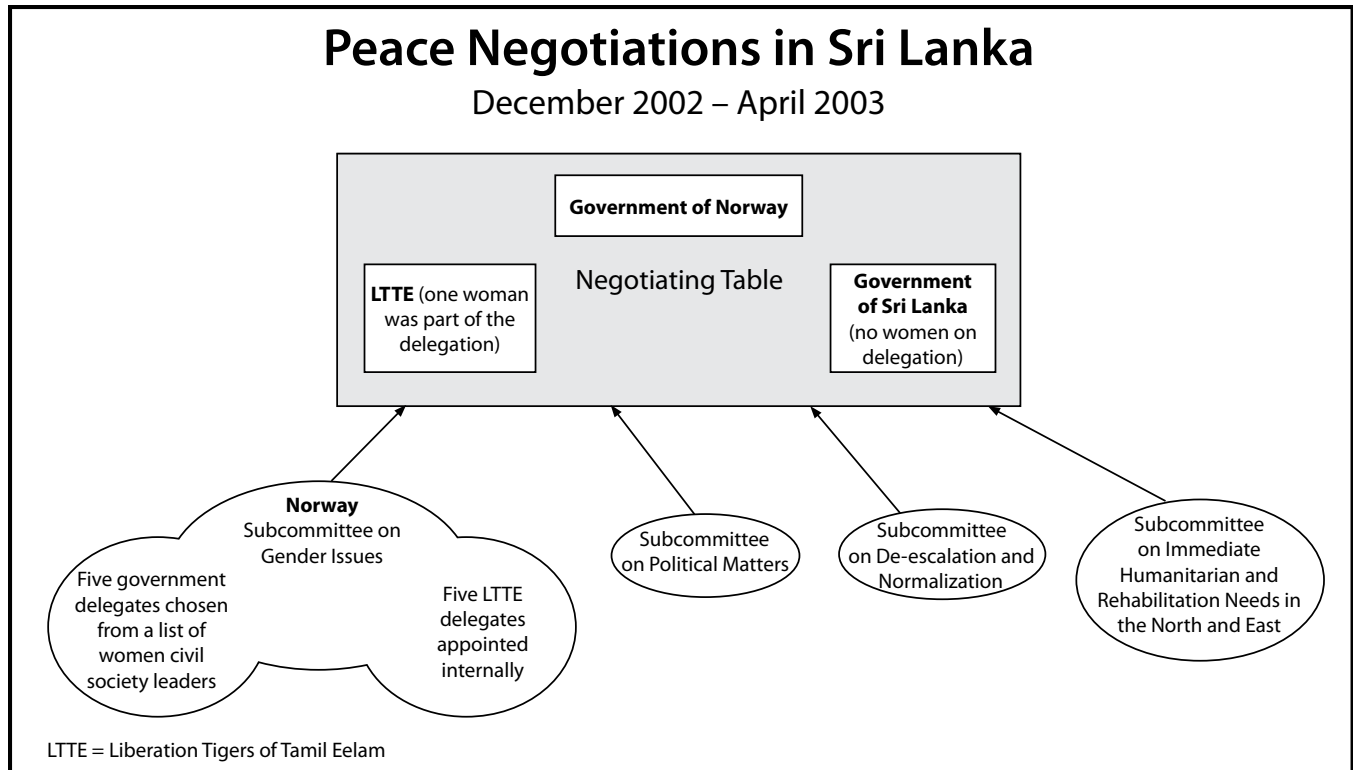
Though the 2002 peace talks did not end the conflict in Sri Lanka, they stand out for providing an entry point for women's inclusion in the longer peace process.

Peace Negotiations in Sri Lanka
December 2002 – April 2003

Government of Norway

Negotiating Table

LTTE (one woman was part of the delegation)

Government of Sri Lanka (no women on delegation)

Norway Subcommittee on Gender Issues

Five government delegates chosen from a list of women civil society leaders

Five LTTE delegates appointed internally

Subcommittee on Political Matters

Subcommittee on De-escalation and Normalization

Subcommittee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs in the North and East

LTTE = Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

Figure 5.

Lobbying the international community: Presented to bilateral and multilateral agencies working in Sri Lanka, key embassies, UN offices, and international monetary institutions, and promoted at the Sri Lanka Aid Group meeting,[8] the report by the women's coalition gained support from international allies including the Canadian High Commissioner, who personally handed it to the parties at a meeting in Oslo.[9] The Norwegian ambassador affirmed that concerns raised in the report were important.[10] Furthermore, Mythri Wikramasinghe, wife of Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Ranil Wikramasinghe, helped women's groups gain access to key decision makers in the government.[11] The government assured that its Peace Secretariat would take into account the concerns raised in the report.

Women's influence on the process

SGI members identified issues of concern to women[12] and planned to have one Government representative and one LTTE representative to the SGI present these concerns to delegates in the main committee. However, the negotiations stalled and the representatives were never able to present their report.

Although women never made a formal presentation of the report to negotiators, the SGI was an unprecedented attempt to involve women in formal peace negotiations. It built on the Kosovo, Northern Ireland, and Burundi peace processes and reflected a growing awareness of the need to include women at all stages of negotiations, peace building, and reconstruction.[13] Domestically, despite the stalemate in the peace talks, the SGI created a vehicle for women to move from their traditional domestic role to the public sphere.[14]

Benefits of women's participation

For the broader accord

- **A progressive and comprehensive process.** Women persuaded the delegates at the peace talks in Oslo to establish the SGI and ultimately challenged leaders to give serious consideration to gender issues.

For women and women's rights

- **Key issues raised.** The SGI mandated identification and consideration in the peace process agenda issues of concern to women.
- **Equal representation of women in politics.** Although the SGI was powerless to continue its work after the peace talks broke down, women's groups continued to work on some of the previously agreed-upon tasks, such as trying to ensure women's equal representation in politics; setting up psychosocial counseling shelters for war-affected women; and examining the educational structure, including changing the gender bias in school textbooks.[15]

Opportunities for improvement

- **Enable the participation of non-partisan women as experts to guarantee all issues are addressed.** Women's contributions were limited by the SGI's lack of autonomy. Although the committee was originally designed to be non-partisan, its members remained highly influenced by the political agendas of their respective factions. Delegates representing the LTTE were direct rank-and-file members bound by the LTTE's political agenda; government-appointed delegates were bound by limitations of their appointments.[16]
- **Commit to women's representation up front and from all sides.** Only one woman was present and involved in the negotiations before the SGI was formed. Only after external pressure and lobbying led to the establishment of the SGI were the concerns of women from both sides of the conflict heard.
- **Broaden the scope of women's contributions beyond traditional roles.** While the SGI was a significant achievement for the women of Sri Lanka, during peace talks women focused primarily on humanitarian issues affecting women and children.[17] Opportunities to speak more broadly about core issues were not seized.
- **Guarantee that women from all sides have a voice.** There was only one woman at the peace talks; she was a delegate for the LTTE. Requiring women delegates as members of every negotiating delegation can guarantee a diversity of women's perspectives at talks.
- **Connect women delegates to the main negotiation process.** SGI members intended for leaders of the Government and LTTE groups to present issues raised by the subcommittee to delegates in the main committee, but negotiations broke down before such a meeting could occur.

Women persuaded the delegates at the peace talks in Oslo to establish the Subcommittee on Gender Issues and ultimately challenged leaders to give serious consideration to gender issues.

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About
The Institute for Inclusive Security

The Institute for Inclusive Security uses research, training, and advocacy to promote the inclusion of all stakeholders, particularly women, in peace processes. We work with a global network of well over 1,000 women leaders from more than 40 conflict regions.

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