



# Fresh Insights on the Quantity and Quality of Women's Inclusion in Peace Processes

Expert views on findings from the “Broadening Participation” and “Civil Society and Peacebuilding” Projects

Policy Brief

May 2015

Thania Paffenholz  
Antonia Potter Prentice  
Cate Buchanan

This policy brief has been prepared for the high-level review and global study on UNSCR 1325

## Background

On 20-21 January 2015, CMI and the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva convened an experts' meeting in Geneva, with support from the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The meeting convened policy analysts, practitioners and academics involved in the women, peace and security agenda to review, analyse and frame the key findings from the "Broadening Participation" research related to women's participation and gendered approaches. A list of participants is appended in Annex 1.

The convening organisations have developed this **seven point Policy Brief**, in consultation with those associated with the meeting, to summarise some of the highlights from the research as well as pertinent discussion points raised at the meeting. The Brief is a contribution to the [UNSCR 1325 High-level Review and its associated Global Study](#)<sup>i</sup> and to the peace and security community more broadly.

The [Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies' Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding](#) (The Graduate Institute) in Geneva has conducted a number of projects within the research cluster on "Participatory Peace Processes and Political Transitions", led by [Thania Paffenholz](#). The "Civil Society and Peacebuilding Project" (2006-2010) investigated the roles of civil society in various stages of conflict and peace processes through twelve in-depth case studies. The subsequent "Broadening Participation" (2011-2015) project continued this focus, studying the role of all additional actors aside from the main negotiation/conflict parties during political negotiations and their implementations through 40 in-depth case studies. While the study examined a wide range of included actors, not specifically or solely women, it identified pertinent new results related to women's contributions and forms of participation.<sup>ii</sup>

The [Crisis Management Initiative](#) (CMI) places gender and inclusion at the core of its work on resolving violent conflict through undertaking or supporting dialogue and mediation. CMI undertakes direct operational work to pilot and integrate gendered and inclusive approaches in contexts including the Central African Republic, South Caucasus, South Sudan and Yemen. CMI also engages in policy dialogue to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of, and practical capacity to implement, gender and inclusivity norms and good practice in the interests of quality, sustainable peace.

### Seven policy points

The brief includes seven policy points followed by suggested actions. These points include:

1. **Investments in process** and outcome documentation and monitoring pay dividends to inform learning and good practice.
2. **Peace process actors'** understanding of issues of 'quantity' and 'quality' related to women's participation needs far greater nuance and accountability.
3. **The persistent lack** of women's direct participation in peace processes is rooted in the political economy of power.

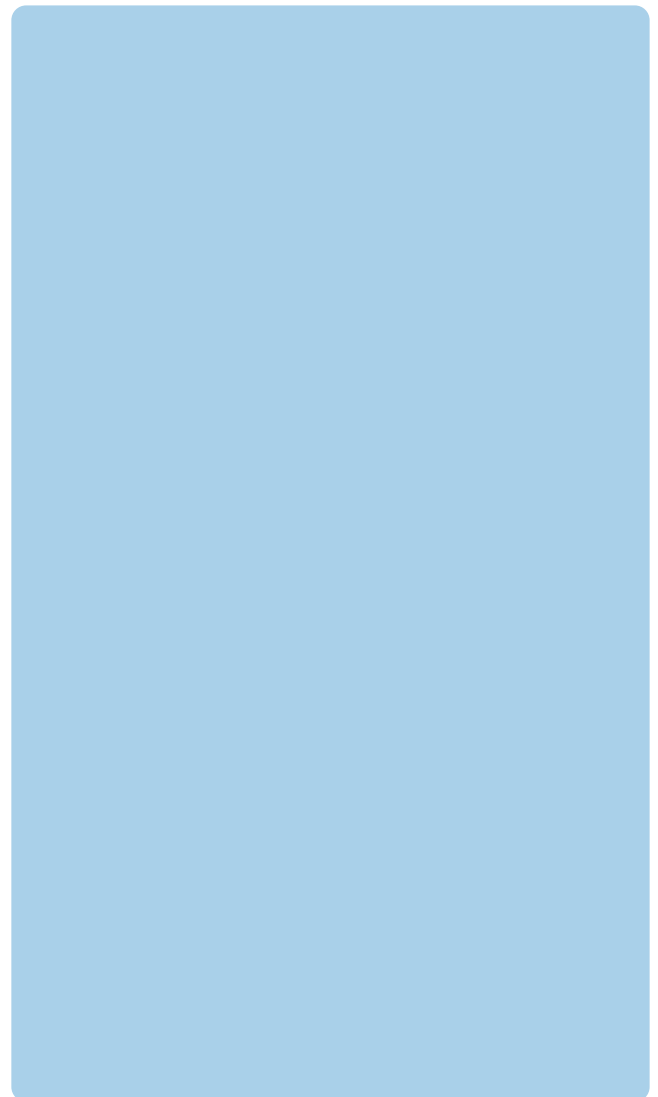
4. **Technical support packages** for women's participation in peace processes should be strengthened and increased.
  5. **What mediators think, do and say** matters in increasing women's meaningful participation.
  6. **The complexity of** women's multiple identities and roles needs to be better reflected in peace process design.
  7. **Civil society** is not a synonym for women or women's rights organisations.
- 

**Policy Point 1: Investments in process and outcome documentation and monitoring pay dividends for informing good practice.**

To better understand how peace processes work, power analysis which includes gender dynamics (a frequently overlooked aspect of power relations in conflict analysis) is vital to improve in mediation support work. The research process was challenged by the dearth of reliable material and how hard it is to reconstruct what really happened. Despite the fact that there is reasonable data about the numbers of women in processes and the fact that gender provisions in peace agreements can be tracked, it remains hard to pinpoint causation. It was not easy to find out which issues and provisions women really brought to the table, and which ones were implemented or not.

Furthermore, it is hard to unpack the significance of women being signatories or not; for example, in the Somaliland Borama peace process in 1993, women were not allowed to sit at the table but were invited to sign the agreement. Success secured on paper in peace agreements can be erased from the record or simply not be implemented. For example, the inclusive constitution-making process in Fiji from 2006 to 2013 produced a widely accepted constitution. However, the military government rejected the constitution altogether and stopped the process. Other forms of elite resistance have been less open. In

Kenya, for example, the highly inclusive process of gathering data for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission led to a detailed report, some 2000 pages long. However, systematic monitoring of the implementation of the many recommendations has not occurred and the gains of the process are at a risk of getting lost.



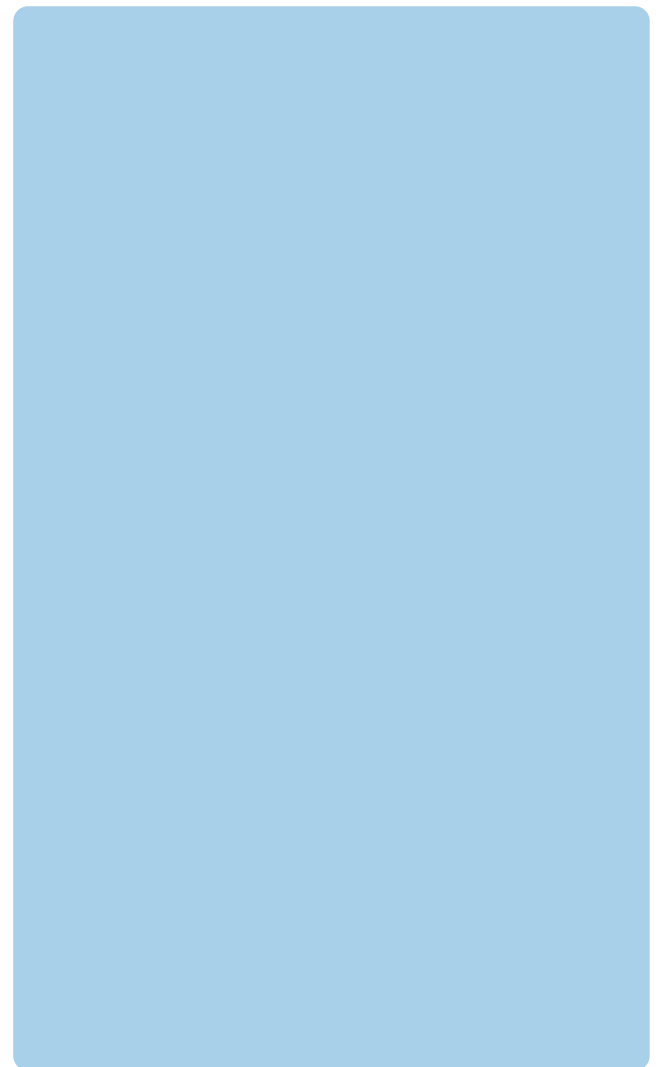
**Policy Point 2: Peace process actors' understanding of issues of 'quantity' and 'quality' related to women's participation needs far greater nuance and accountability.**

The Graduate Institute's research shows that **when women participate in a way which is substantive and well prepared so that they can influence the negotiations and the peace agreement ("influential or quality participation"), this correlates with much better results in terms of reaching and implementing meaningful agreements.** The correlation between the influential women's participation and reaching an agreement was found to be statistically significant.

The research offers **no evidence that women's participation harms a process.** In all cases where women had a strong role in the process an agreement was reached, except for one. This backs UN Women's conclusions: "While there are countless examples in which peace processes have broken down due to a myriad of factors – Including disagreement over choice of mediator, internal dissidence within armed groups, ceasefire violations ... a case in which peace negotiation were derailed due to women's demands has yet to be discovered."<sup>iii</sup>

The research shows (see e.g. Box 1) that it is important to understand the difference between mere presence of women and their influence as included actors. This can range from passive (as many male participants in peace processes also are) to highly active modes (chairing processes, facilitating, advising etc.). Both forms are important substantively and symbolically. However, ultimately the ability to input substantively and to influence decision-making are central ingredients for meaningful participation.

The workshop experts emphasised that representation of a group (e.g. women) by a man is not a substitute for participation. For example, this often occurs in situations of contested ethnic identities where men from ethnic groups represent "women" in order to claim a space at the table. Representation in this form rarely involves consultation with and feedback to those represented as a form of accountability.<sup>iv</sup> More practically, the meaningful presence and participation of women are easier to achieve, as is inclusion more broadly, when the peace process is physically located in the country.



### Box 1: Women at the table – with and without decision-making power

**Northern Ireland** (1996): the launch of all-party talks in Northern Ireland brought the potential for broader inclusion, through an election process to become a party to the dialogue forum and gain seats at the peace table. In order to be present alongside the mainstream parties and political representatives, Catholic and Protestant women's groups came together to gather the ten thousand signatures required to establish a political party, the cross-community Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC). With a platform for bringing women's concerns to the negotiating table and ensuring an inclusive peace accord, NIWC was one of ten parties popularly elected to participate in the negotiations.<sup>1</sup> NIWC secured enough support across the communities to earn two of the twenty seats at the negotiating table. Women used this access to the talks to directly influence the content of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. They brought a greater focus on social issues to the agenda and ultimately secured the inclusion of language on victims' rights and reconciliation in the agreement, including a commitment of support to young victims of violence. Another clause also called for women's full and equal political participation.

**Nepal**, women's participation in the Constituent Assembly (CA) was given a boost by the adoption of a quota system, which led to a total of 197 female CA members out of 601. Women comprised almost 33% of the total CA. They were also represented in a number of the CA's thematic committees. However, in their case, the increased representation did not have a commensurate impact on their influence. Faced by resistance from powerful, networked male delegates, female delegates were not able to overcome party loyalties, even for the sake of finding a common women's position for important political issues that affect women's rights.


### **Policy Point 3: The persistent lack of women's direct participation in peace processes is rooted in the political economy of power.**

Data consistently shows that **a critical place where women are most absent is in the direct participation at the negotiation table as parties or mediators**<sup>v</sup>. The "Broadening Participation" research provides further analysis about women's participation at the peace table and beyond by affirming that many other forms of direct and non-direct participation are occurring, and that women are significantly influential at times. However, it also confirms that presence at the negotiation table is not the guarantee of influence and success it is sometimes imagined to be.

The discussions during the expert meeting in January underlined that the lack of consistent, formal, and meaningful participation of

women in peace processes remains a key problem, rooted in the political economy of power. Thania Paffenholz reflected on these points in relation to the research and noted that "the power-related reasons to include women [at the table] are not there; so the women are not there if they do not lobby for their own inclusion."

Experts were clear that the persistent patriarchy<sup>vi</sup> is not only the key obstacle to gender equality and to women's participation here (and in all other decision-making fora) but it also remains a fundamental factor in undermining and hindering inclusive and sustainable peace processes. Patriarchy stands in the way of transforming unequal power structures including, but not limited to, those between women and men.



**Policy Point 4: Actions to enhance women’s participation in peace processes should be strengthened and increased.**

The ‘Broadening Participation’ research shows that **where actors, women in this case, have been effectively and technically enabled, prepared and supported, their chances to participate in a way which helps to positively influence processes for better outcomes are higher.**

Effective, quality support to women and women’s organisations is a key reinforcing factor for women to contribute more substantially and hence reach ‘influential participation’, which in turn, has positive results in attaining agreements and in their actual implementation. This has been observed among others in the inter-Congolese dialogue in DRC, and in the Somalia Eldoret/Mbagathi process in 2002-2004.

For example, the research shows a range of support techniques that have emerged since UNSCR 1325, and which show positive effects. These includes deploying gender advisers; using carefully designed gender quotas as seen in Yemen or Nepal; supporting coalition building as seen in DRC; transferring skills and learning from others as seen in Burundi; providing specific support structures during negotiations as well as flexible, targeted funding as seen in Somalia (see Box 3 below).

These support techniques are more effective when they are well planned and timely implemented, and ideally delivered in advance of the beginning of a formal political process. If coalition-building only begins when the peace talks open, chances of success and influence are reduced due to the lack of time to build relationships, and to communicate positions and views.

### **Box 2: Women's support centre during Somalian peace negotiations**

During the 2001 – 2005 Kenyan led Somali peace negotiations, women benefitted from a number of support structures sponsored by international organisations. The key structure was a resource center supported by UN Women. It was equipped with computers, photocopiers, printers, and internet access. It helped women to publish materials supporting their positions which they distributed to the delegates, the mediator, and other key individuals at the plenary sessions and during the entire negotiations. As one of the few locations available with adequate equipment, the centre provided women's groups with material support for their lobbying. Furthermore, influential figures were also forced to use the centre's equipment which gave the women direct access to the negotiating parties. Bolstered, women's groups lobbied for, and achieved, the successful introduction of human rights and gender-sensitive language into the agreement as well as a 12% women's quota in the Transitional Parliament. While this should have resulted in 33 seats, only 8% of the seats awarded were granted to women.

The expert discussions underlined how these strategies need to be designed, funded and implemented as a package and not in standalone ways. As the international evidence-base is evolving, more work remains to identify what works and why, how strategies can be combined, and what can and cannot be transferred from one setting to another<sup>x</sup>.

For example, gender quotas, while successful in improving the quantitative representation of women, do not automatically lead to increased women's influence (as noted above related to Nepal). On the positive side, the research shows that when the peace agreement language is specific on the inclusion measures (not just for women) during the implementation phases and cover the composition of key commissions (e.g. on elections, land or constitutional reform), the more effective such initiatives have been in practice (for example Kenya and Liberia).

### **Policy Point 5: What mediators think, do and say matters in increasing women's meaningful participation.**

The research shows that **mediators can play a positive role in pushing for women's inclusion**. Critically, this was complemented or even led by lobbying by women's rights organisations and elements of the international community. In contrast, conflict parties rarely push for women's inclusion, preferring to promote the inclusion of other actors (mostly men) for their own political reasons (alliances, allegiances, deals, legitimacy, buy-in etc.). This suggests that working with mediators, even while they remain predominantly male, to help them to better appreciate women's

rights, gender and inclusion norms, and good practice, remains a useful strategic investment. However, it can be amplified with greater accountability from mediators and their teams about their choices.

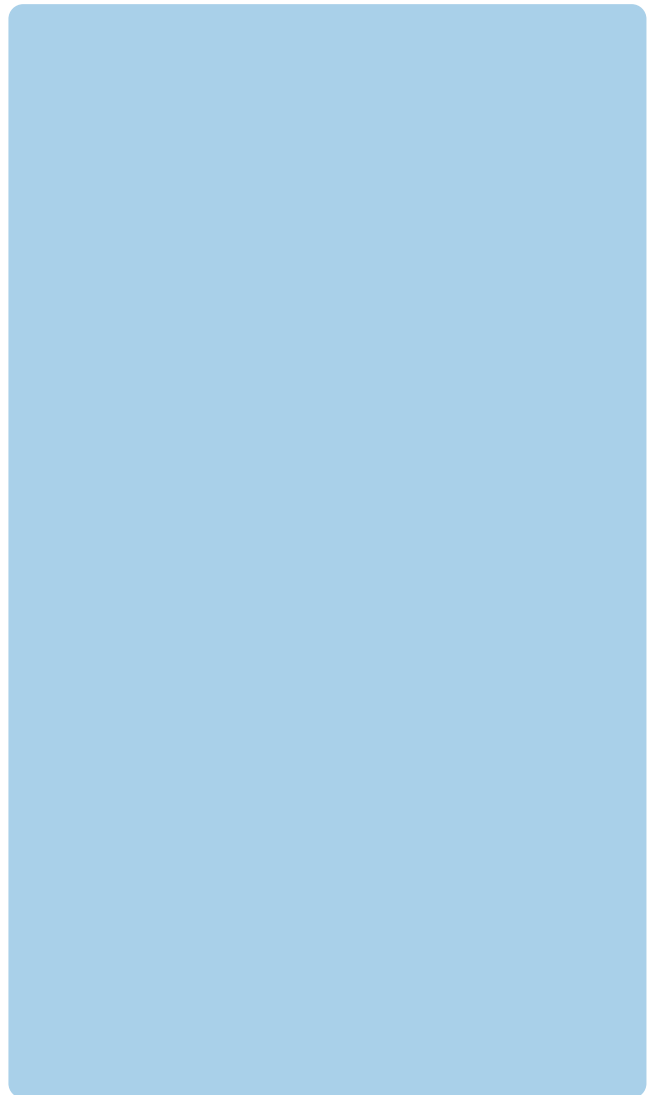
Furthermore, given that women often champion the inclusion of women (e.g. Graça Machel, Kenya; Ruth Perry, Liberia; Sister Lorraine Garasu, Papua New Guinea), and that role-modeling behaviour matters in effecting change,<sup>xi</sup> the task of increasing the number of female mediators remains critical. Yet, fifteen years after global agreement to get more women into such positions, efforts and results remain unsatisfactory. The international community still consistently and overwhelmingly selects men for mediation positions. UN Women estimated in 2012 that women comprised 4 per cent of signatories, 2.4 per cent of chief mediators, 3.7 per cent of witnesses and 9 per cent of negotiators between 1992-2011.<sup>xii</sup>

To remedy this systematic exclusion, many organisations<sup>xiii</sup> map, network, actively support and promote women with relevant status and experience as contenders for mediation and facilitation roles. The international community has also invested in a number of training and support interventions for such women. However, the problem has never been the supply side though it is all too often framed as such. Instead, it is a demand-related issue compounded by a lack of behavioural change, which leads to talented and capable women being overlooked or dismissed. As such, it is incumbent that those making nominations and selections change their behaviour.

There are increasing pools from which women can be selected for such roles. For example, with the slow but discernible upswing in numbers of female parliamentarians, especially in

countries recovering from war and/or violent conflict (largely due to the implementation of quotas), there are growing cadres of women with relevant skills and exposure.

In such contexts where violent conflict relapses (e.g. South Sudan, Yemen), there are often women in public positions to draw into the negotiations. It is also increasingly easy to identify active and credible women through global peace and security networks such as that of the [Global Network of Women Peacebuilders](#), the [Women's International League for Peace and Freedom](#), and databases like [Women Waging Peace](#) hosted by the Institute for Inclusive Security.





**Box 3: The seven modalities of inclusion as defined in the “Broadening Participation” research**

**1. Direct representation at the negotiation table**

- a. Inclusion within negotiation delegations
- b. Enlarging the number of negotiation delegations, i.e. including a separate women’s delegation.
- c. National Dialogues (peace and constitution making, reforms)

**2. Observer status**

**3. Consultations**

- a. Official consultations
- b. Non or semi-official consultations
- c. Public consultations

**4. Inclusive commissions**

- a. Post-agreement commissions
- b. Commissions preparing/conducting peace processes
- c. Permanent commissions

**5. High-level problem solving workshops**

**6. Public decision-making (i.e. referendum)**

**7. Mass action**

**Policy Point 6: The complexity of women’s multiple identities and roles needs to be better reflected in peace process design.**

The research shows that **organised women’s groups were the second largest category of actors included in all identified inclusion modalities** (see Box 3 below). The largest was organised civil society.

The caveats to this apparent good news involve understanding the terms on which women are included, and the space and capacity they have to participate substantively: are they there because they are women, or because they happen to be women while representing another grouping? Do they have the space, legitimacy and technical capacity to speak and be heard?

In addition, the research showed that conflict parties were primarily interested in inclusion to increase buy-in and legitimacy, while also reducing their own risks and exposure to criticism of being unrepresentative. As the discussions highlighted during the expert meeting, if women are included for ‘tokenistic’ reasons,

and are not influential in the process, this can in fact serve to further exclude them from being considered during the actual negotiations (e.g. left out of pre-meetings, relegated to ‘note taking’), as well as for future positions.

Just as the research shows that **there are a much greater range of modalities of inclusion than policymakers and practitioners may have thought**, it also shows that there is a greater range of women’s roles and rationales for participation as has been outlined by women’s organisations for decades: participants, mediator, facilitator, negotiating party, adviser, witness, observer, signatory and other mediation support roles. They may not all be women’s rights advocates or gender equality advocates; nor may they be peace process experts or have any negotiation skills, which is the case for the overwhelming majority of men active in peace processes.

Women may also be part of grass roots, middle class, elite or other such categories, which will affect their ability to mobilise resources and support. It is more appropriate to understand these attributes and dynamics, and strategise how they can support women’s robust participation, and quality peace process

outcomes – sustainable, inclusive, transparent  
– rather than judging and excluding women  
on these bases.

### **Policy Point 7: Civil society is not a synonym for women or women’s rights organisations.**

Civil society, the obvious place where peacemakers look to ‘consult’ outside ‘officialdom’ or ‘track one’ is notoriously hard to define and even understand in different contexts. People can wear many ‘hats’ at once. This is especially the case for women from ethnic groups who are often pressed to choose one identity over another.

Civil society can also be another powerful force that marginalises women. Relying on it to be the conduit for more representative peace processes and as a way to ‘tick the women box’ is, at best, misplaced optimism. Underlining this, and affirming critiques by women’s rights organisations the world over, earlier research of the Graduate Institute confirms that **men hold the majority of positions in civil society organisations.**<sup>xiv</sup> Thus, it is all too common for peace forums to develop women’s committees or working groups in order for women’s voices and concerns to clearly heard – if only by each other. Clearer thinking from donors and INGOs who support such fora is needed to ensure more equitable inclusion of women in main decision-making structures of such initiatives.

It also shows that **of the coalitions that exist in peacemaking, women’s coalitions have the most evident track record in overcoming the cleavages that divide them, achieving compromises and identifying common issues on which they are prepared to speak out.**



\*\*\*\*\*

**For further information please contact:**

Thania Paffenholz: [thania.paffenholz@graduateinstitute.ch](mailto:thania.paffenholz@graduateinstitute.ch)

Antonia Potter Prentice: [antonia.potterprentice@cmi.fi](mailto:antonia.potterprentice@cmi.fi)

## Annex 1

### Expert Meeting participants/contributors

| Name                    | Organisation  | Position                        |
|-------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Danielle Goldberg       | Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP)              | Program Officer                 |
| Barbro Svedberg         | Womens International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) | Project Manager                 |
| Rachel Gasser           | SwissPeace  | Deputy Head, Mediation          |
| Amel Gorani             | HD Centre   | Inclusion Coordinator           |
| Madeline Koch           | International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)         | Programme Officer               |
| Sanam Anderlini         | International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)         | Co-Founder, Director            |
| Bandana Rana            | Saathi  | Executive President             |
| Marie O'Reilly          | International Peace Institute (IPI)                       | Editor and Research Fellow      |
| Cate Buchanan           | Athena Consortium   | Co Managing Partner             |
| Isabelle Geuskens       | Women Peacemakers Programme                               | Executive Director              |
| Michelle Barsa          | Institute for Inclusive Security                          | Deputy Director                 |
| Katarina Salmela        | UN Women  | Policy Specialist               |
| Cornelieke Keizer       | Cordaid   | Partnership Development Manager |
| Madeleine Rees          | Womens International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) | Secretary General               |
| Andrea O'Suilleabhain   | International Peace Institute (IPI)                       | Senior Policy Analyst           |
| Kathrin Quesada         |   | Researcher                      |
| Jana Naujoks            | International Alert                                       | Senior Programme Officer        |
| Anna Wildt              | Swiss MFA, Human Security Division                        | Gender Adviser                  |
| Stefan Ott              | Swiss MFA, Human Security Division                        | Intern                          |
| Christine Bell          | Edinburgh Law School                                      | Professor of Constitutional Law |
| Thania Paffenholz       | Graduate Institute/CCDP                                   | Project Coordinator             |
| Mireille Widmer         | Graduate Institute/CCDP                                   | Policy Officer                  |
| Tuija Talvitie          | CMI   | Executive Director              |
| Antonia Potter Prentice | CMI   | Senior Manager                  |
| Silja Grundström        | CMI   | Project Officer                 |

<sup>i</sup> Civil society inputs to the Global Study have been collated by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and are available at <http://peacewomen.org/security-council/2015-high-level-review-global-study>.

- 
- <sup>ii</sup> These various project findings have been produced in a range of formats for different audiences. See Paffenholz, T.
- 2015 'Results on Women and Gender' Briefing Paper. Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding. Geneva: The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies <http://graduateinstitute.ch/files/live/sites/iheid/files/sites/ccdp/shared/Docs/Publications/briefingpaperbroad-er%20participation.pdf>
  - 2015 'Broadening Participation' Project Briefing Paper <http://graduateinstitute.ch/files/live/sites/iheid/files/sites/ccdp/shared/Docs/Publications/briefingpaperbroader%20participation.pdf>
- <sup>iii</sup> UN Women, *Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations*
- <sup>iv</sup> F. Zanker, 2013, *Legitimate representation in mediation processes: Civil society involvement in Liberia and Kenya*, Centre for Mediation in Africa, Mediation Arguments No. 1.
- <sup>v</sup> UN Women, *Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections Between Presence and Influence*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, October 2012.
- <sup>vi</sup> Defined as a system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it.
- <sup>vii</sup> <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/armed.htm>
- <sup>viii</sup> <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>. Also see S. Inglis, M. Muna, A. Iiyambo, V. Nadjibulla, L. Waldorf and AM Goetz *CEDAW and Security Council Resolution 1325: A Quick Guide*, UN Women 2006
- <sup>ix</sup> In the words of E. Prugl: "we need to focus less on what women and men do but more on what gendering does .. as a social and political process"; in *Gender and War: Causes, Constructions, and Critique* reviewing *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*, J. S. Goldstein. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001. See also N. Puechguirbal, *Discourses on Gender, Patriarchy and Resolution 1325: A Textual Analysis of UN Documents*, International Peacekeeping, Volume 17, Issue 2, 2010.
- <sup>x</sup> For a useful discussion on our lack of knowledge on transfer strategies in terms of women's empowerment in conflict settings, see J. F. Klot and H. Seckinelgin, *From Global Policy to Local Knowledge: What is the Link between Women's Formal Political Participation and Gender Equality in Conflict-affected Contexts?* Global Policy, Volume 5, Issue 1, pages 36–46, February 2014.
- <sup>xi</sup> Naraghi Anderlini, Sanam, *Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters*, Lynne Rienner, 2007; see also Beaman, Lori; Duflo, Esther; Pande, Rohini and Topalova, Petia, *Female Leadership Raises Aspirations and Educational Attainment for Girls: A Policy Experiment in India*, Science 3 February 2012: Vol.335 no. 6068 pp. 582-586
- <sup>xii</sup> UN Women, *ibid*
- <sup>xiii</sup> See for example several of the organisations whose experts attended the meeting, listed in Annex 1, including the [Global Network of Women Peacebuilders](#), the [Women's International League for Peace and Freedom](#) and databases like [Women Waging Peace](#) hosted by the Institute for Inclusive Security.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Paffenholz, T. (2010). *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: a critical assessment*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers. Paffenholz, T. (2015) 'Civil Society and Peacebuilding Project' Briefing Paper. Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding. Geneva: The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies <http://graduateinstitute.ch/files/live/sites/iheid/files/sites/ccdp/shared/Docs/Publications/briefingpapercivil%20society.pdf>