



Political Parties of Finland for Democracy

POLITICAL PARTIES & PEACE BUILDING

**The Forgotten
Stakeholder in
Peace Processes**

- The number of armed conflicts reached a post-Cold War peak in 2015. Armed conflicts have become more complex, involving more non-state groups, regional and international actors and religious groups, and are often linked to global challenges such as climate change and poverty.
- Peace mediation requires linking the different levels of violent conflicts and building bridges between affected groups. Inclusive peace mediation, i.e. the involvement of a wide range of actors from different sectors by giving them the opportunity to be heard and to have their concerns addressed, can knit together a frayed social fabric and allow all groups to participate in transforming their country.
- Peace builders are developing their understanding of how to achieve inclusivity, but one key stakeholder for transition to peace – political parties – remains overlooked.
- Involving political parties in peace processes is shown¹ to have a positive impact on the sustainability of the peace brokered. As parties are key to the democratic development of any country, their inclusion in peace processes is vital.
- Political parties can also fuel antagonism, grievances and conflict. International actors need to deepen their understanding of the role political parties play in conflicts and conflict resolution. All efforts to engage with parties and support them must be contextual and based on understanding the situation thoroughly.

MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Traditional conflict management and peace operations have focused on peace negotiations and peace building with the idea that democracy will follow automatically once peace has been achieved and elections held. In terms of democracy support the focus has mainly been on supporting civil society and elections, because this has been seen as non-political, impartial support, that will not fuel antagonism and that the conflicting parties can all approve. Elections have been seen as the end point of peace operations and peace processes deemed successful, when citizens have been able to vote in free multiparty elections. Yet, elections do not guarantee democratisation and peace is hard to build and maintain without inclusive, multiparty democracy. Although democracy support is inherently political³, it should not be shied away from.

Political parties can be supported impartially and if support is given only to the technical elements of democracy, such as elections and good governance, democracy will remain superficial.

It is important that political parties are involved in peace processes from the beginning. In multiparty democracies parties represent the hopes and needs of citizens and formulate them into concrete policies. >

They can articulate citizens' grievances and find peaceful solutions to them. In addition, they facilitate citizens' political participation and ensure that all voices are heard. In a functioning multiparty democracy parties create and reinforce citizens' trust in political institutions and

the system of governance, and therefore it is important to support parties and include them in all stages of the peace processes. A functioning representative democracy can build bridges and mitigate arising conflicts of interest so, that sustainable peace can be achieved.

STAGES OF CONFLICT



POLITICAL DEADLOCK A situation where the political powers that be are at odds and fruitful cross-party dialogue is impossible, especially at the highest levels. In a situation like this, political parties' grassroots actors and organizations, i.e. municipal level politicians, women's wings and youth organizations can play a key role in facilitating dialogue. Case example: Zambia (see page 4.)



ESCALATION OF CRISIS A situation where the conflict has evolved further, possibly into violence, and political cooperation has ceased or become impossible. Political parties can prevent the situation from escalating into a full-blown conflict by cooperating and continuing multiparty dialogue to find peaceful solutions. Parties can work to keep political institutions and systems of governance functioning and inclusive.



CONFLICT A time of violence, unrest and even war. Parties have wide reach and during times of conflict they can greatly influence how their members and followers act (i.e. engender violence, convince to cease hostilities

etc.). They can push for peace or create more animosity and thus greatly impact the peace process.



PEACE PROCESS Peace negotiations and formation of government after hostilities have ended. Political parties need to have ownership in the peace negotiations as sustainable peace can only be achieved if all conflicting parties are included. During the peace process political parties are the channels through which citizens can voice their opinions and also the stakeholders that will form government and begin to rebuild.



POST-CONFLICT AND DEMOCRATIZATION Rebuilding of the state and its institutions, holding elections. Political parties are the stakeholders that represent the people and their wishes on the future course of the country. Holding elections and forming government on a multiparty basis will build sustainable peace and allow for inclusive decision-making with a lesser likelihood for violent conflict, as grievances can be expressed and resolved through non-violent political channels.

THE ROLES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Modern conflicts are complex and have various root causes, but have a political aspect, and the groups at odds are often political in background – or at least appear to be so, while their agendas might be for example ones of economic gain. Understanding the importance of inclusivity in peace processes is increasing, yet international actors have been reluctant to engage with political institutions, and especially political parties⁴. Lately one emphasis has been on the role of religious and traditional leaders⁵. Though political parties are a key stakeholder for any country's democratic development and creating democratic processes, they rarely have the necessary seats at the tables where peace is brokered, nor is their potential in building sustainable peace in post-conflict settings truly utilized. There is a need for capacity-building of political parties as a part of peace processes.

The role parties play in societies is crucial, especially in fledgling democracies and post-conflict states that are in the process of democratization and democratic development⁶. Political parties serve as platforms through which citizens can express grievances which otherwise might escalate to violence, as well as their interests and views on which direction state building should take.

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resented groups, such as women and youth, is key, but still very much overlooked and should be strengthened. Empowering female politicians and ensuring the next generation has agency and is included in the peace process makes for lasting peace agreements.⁷

In addition, inclusion of women on all levels of decision making is clearly stated in 2030 Agenda goal 5.5. as well as Security Council resolutions 2122 and 1325 and General Assembly resolution 66/130. This goal should also be reflected in ensuring that women have seats at the tables where peace is negotiated. Yet, as skilled politicians and peace mediators are not born, they are made, supporting women on all levels of political parties, including on the local level, is important to ensure wider participation. This, in turn, also builds a more inclusive and thus peaceful society.

The peace agreement, however, is only the beginning, and the need for support in post-conflict countries is ongoing and long-lasting. Here multiparty democracy support is key. Supporting the establishment of democratic governance and political institutions and the formation of political parties as well as providing assistance for holding free elections are ways towards a conflict-free, democratic state. Yet, democratic elections are by no means the end goal in a peace process and should not be hurried into. To sustain peace, democracy needs support in between elections in the form of for example capacity building of political parties, dialogue skill training for politicians and supporting parties in becoming more programmatic and inclusive.⁸

HOW TO SUPPORT POLITICAL PARTIES

Pace negotiations are only the first step, and even if political parties are involved – which often is not the case – the peace process doesn't necessarily mean easy transition to democracy. Though political parties are the actors that will lead rebuilding and governance after conflict, for example rebel groups turned political parties often retain their authoritarian structure and employ authoritarian rule once in government, and political parties with inner weaknesses, lack of organization or fragmentation may disrupt the peace more than support it⁹. For the road to a functioning democracy to be paved, parties need continued support on a multiparty basis, including capacity and strategy building, programmatic support, as well as in inclusivity and multiparty dialogue, that international democracy support organizations can offer.

Supporting parties in strengthening their intra-party democracy is vital, because without it emerging parties can easily form into leader-centred organizations leading to a culture of patronage within the party.

During Peace Negotiations

International Actors

- Need to engage with political parties and bring them to the tables where peace is negotiated. Inclusion of all relevant parties makes for commitment to keep the peace.
- Should encourage parties to demand a seat at the table and negotiate with other political parties and groups for enhanced dialogue and collaboration
- Can, in one-party states, influence the ruling party to recognize the legitimacy of fledgling parties and their right to attend peace negotiations.
- Should also emphasize the importance of the representation of underrepresented groups, such as women and youth, in peace negotiations and encourage political parties to be more inclusive.

Prior To And Post-Conflict

International Actors

- Should support fragmented parties in becoming more unified and developing political programmes.
- Can play a major role in helping reshape former rebel groups into democratic political parties and in integrating them into society and the political system.

- Need to support parties in strengthening their internal democracy as well as political and organizational systems in order to create well-structured and democratic parties.
- Need to support parties in inclusion of minorities in decision making and gender equality as well as support engagement between parties and the broader population.

Involving Political Parties: Zambia

During the 2016 presidential elections the political situation in Zambia grew extremely tense and resulted in violent clashes between the ruling party Patriotic Front and the main opposition party United Party for National Development. The elections saw the victory of ruling president Edgar Lungu over Hakainde Hichilema, lead opposition candidate. The opposition rejected the outcome and argued that biased media, restrictions on movement and campaigning, as well as alleged irregularities during polling, counting, tallying, transmission and announcement of results resulted in Lungu's victory. The opposition filed a challenge of the election results and increasing tension between the two parties finally led to Hichilema's arrest on charges of treason.

During this time of political deadlock when dialogue between the two parties was impossible, the women's wings of the parties were able to continue dialogue and cooperation both on the national and the local level. This was possible through multiparty collaboration established by Zambia National Women's Lobby, with support from Political Parties of Finland for Democracy - Demo Finland.

After the political deadlock was resolved, the continued cooperation of the women's wings has garnered praise from the parties.

- Should support parties in creating multiparty platforms on grassroots levels and providing trainings for politicians as well as supporting cooperation across party lines.
- Must support parties in establishing political institutions and strengthening local democracy to build greater trust and engagement between political actors and citizens.

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We see the platform as a success. We are proud of the women as they were able to continue collaboration with each other across party boundaries during the challenging times.

Mr. Andrew Kakumbi, UPND District Chairperson





Political Parties of Finland for Democracy

Demo Finland is a unique co-operative organisation of all Finnish parliamentary parties supporting multi-party democracy in new and developing democracies.

www.demofinland.org

FOOTNOTES & FURTHER READING 1. John Ishiyama. 2016. From Bullets to Ballots: The Transformation of Rebel Groups into Political Parties. 2. United Nations; World Bank. 2018. Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict and United States Institute for Peace. 2017. Inclusive Peace Processes Are Key to Ending Violent Conflict and NOREF. Clare Castillejo. 2016. Report: Political Parties and Peace Building. 3. Thomas Carothers & Diane de Gramont. 2013. Development Aid Confronts Politics; The Almost Revolution. 4. Antti Pentikäinen. 2015. Reforming UN mediation through inclusion of traditional peacemakers. 5. The United Nations. 2012. Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution. 6. John Ishiyama. 2016. From Bullets to Ballots: The Transformation of Rebel Groups into Political Parties. 7. UN Women. Christine Bell. 2018. Brief: Accessing Political Power: Women and Political Power-Sharing in Peace Processes. 8. Political parties of Finland for Democracy - Demo Finland. 2014. Democracy support and conflicts - From prevention to rebuilding. 9. NOREF. Clare Castillejo. 2016. Report: The Role of Ex -Rebel Parties in Building Peace.

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