

**GENDER-INCLUSIVE
CONFLICT
TRANSFORMATION:**



Insights from
female former
combatants and
women associated
with resistance
and liberation
movements

Policy Insights Series:
Gender-Inclusive Conflict
Transformation
Issue 1
September 2022

To cite this paper

Cruz Almeida, C., Cochrane-Buchmüller, V. and Dudouet, V. (2022). Gender-inclusive conflict transformation: Insights from female former combatants and women associated with resistance and liberation movements. Policy Insight Series (1) Berlin: Berghof Foundation.

Copy editing: Emily Pollak

Design: AMBERPRESS, Katja Koeberlin, Gosia Warrink

Photos inside: ©Berghof Foundation | Women ex-combatants in a workshop about needs and challenges for women's participation in peace processes and post-war transitions.

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Published by

Berghof Foundation

Berghof Foundation Operations gGmbH
Lindenstrasse 34
10969 Berlin
Germany
www.berghof-foundation.org

Funded by



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs

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GENDER-INCLUSIVE CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION:

Insights from female former
combatants and women
associated with resistance
and liberation movements

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Victoria Cochrane-Buchmüller

We thank the following colleagues for their contributions
to the project: Stina Maria Lundström, Tim Jan Roetman and
Shadia Marhaban

1 Introduction

In many conflict zones throughout the world, including El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, Aceh/Indonesia, Philippines, Myanmar, Nepal, Timor-Leste, Northern Ireland, South Africa, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Ethiopia, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, women have played significant roles in non-state armed groups (NSAGs). They join armed groups for a variety of reasons and perform multiple functions and roles – representing up to 40% of group membership. However, these women are still broadly excluded from peace negotiation processes and their distinct needs are not considered or are discarded when implementing post-war peacebuilding programmes.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSC1325) was launched in 2000 with the aim of recognising the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict; UNSC1325 aims to strengthen the peacebuilding agency of women, as well as raising awareness about the need for special measures to protect women during conflict. The Resolution makes cursory reference to women in armed movements in Clause 13, which “encourages all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration [DDR] to consider the different needs of female and male combatants.” However, that statement – which focuses narrowly on DDR programs – has proved insufficient to strengthen the inclusion of female combatants’ and their leadership in peace negotiations and post-war transitions.

The knowledge and experience of women associated with Resistance and Liberation Movements¹ (RLMs) remains an untapped resource for the peacebuilding community. Since 2018, the Berghof Foundation’s project *Supporting Women in Resistance And Liberation Movements in Peace Negotiations and Post-War Transitions* has focused on the creation of a peer-learning network for female members of eight active and recently demobilised RLMs. In so doing, the network aims to enhance these women’s skills and expertise during peace negotiation processes, and to bolster their capacity and opportunities for post-war political and community leadership.

1 See Dudouet (2009: 9) for a detailed definition of RLMs: “The terminology used in the literature to qualify such movements revolves around the notions of “non-state armed groups”, “rebel movements”, “insurgencies” – seen as relatively neutral labels which avoid the partiality and moral judgement inherent in ambiguous terms like “terrorist organisations” or “freedom fighters”. From the Berghof project’s onset, its participants have noted the inadequacy of some of the above terms, and rejected their use. For instance, the label “non-state” neglects the aspiration of some movements to form separate states, as well as, at times, their quasi-governmental features as a ‘state within a state’. The label “armed groups” was found not to be appropriate either, since it fails to account for a complex set of means of political action, armed and unarmed, which evolve constantly according to circumstances and strategic calculations. We therefore decided to name such movements after their primary objectives, and opted for the inclusive terminology of “resistance/liberation movements” (RLMs).

This report is the first in the Policy Insight Series on gender-inclusive conflict transformation,² which will be published throughout 2022 and 2023. This first issue aims to contextualise and critically review current policies and practices in peace negotiations and post-war transitions, based on experiences and testimonies shared by network members during activities conducted since 2018 (highlighted in boxes with direct quotes),³ and complimented by relevant academic references. Drawing on comparative learning gathered within the network, the subsequent issues will be written through a participatory process of joint analysis and collective generation of key lessons learned. The series will present the experiences, aspirations and lessons learned from women in or associated with RLMs on gender-inclusive approaches to peace negotiations and post-war peacebuilding. We will compile recommendations from the network, entry points and opportunities that emerge, as well as presenting best practices to help mediation teams, donor countries and peacebuilding agencies engage effectively with female (ex)combatants and women in or associated with RLMs all stages of peace processes. Through presenting the experiences, knowledge and insights of the network, the series aims to be a tool for peacebuilding actors to enhance their support to the political, social and economic (re)integration of female (ex)-combatants into democratic, peaceful and civilian life. We will place particular emphasis on the value of self-led (re) integration initiatives, as a means to bolster these women's community leadership during conflict, active negotiation processes and peacetime.

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- 2 Gender inclusive processes are those that take into consideration gender inequality, understood as a system of societal structures that give more power and privileges to the social constructed male identities and the power systems and social structures that organize social life in a hierarchical, mutually exclusive categories, which lead to relationships of sub/super ordination to one another (Confortini, 2006: 335).
 - 3 Most of the quotes remain anonymised to protect the security of the network members.





WIDI

BANKUMBUK ISKANDI

DAMKUMBUK BANGSA (DAM-MILF)

SOCIAL WEFARE COMMITTEE - MILF

2 Current Practices in Peace Negotiations

Although inclusive approaches to peace negotiation processes⁴ are almost universally accepted as one of the key factors contributing to sustainable peace, the expertise and knowledge of those who have lived in, worked on or taken part in conflicts is still not sufficiently valued in peace-making processes. This is especially true for female members of RLMs, whose skills and competencies, often acquired during conflict, are rarely translated into effective contributions to peace processes.

“It was not really difficult to transform from being a combatant in the struggle to being an advocate for peace. It should be noted that we were university students, preparing for our careers. This was cut short during the struggle and now it’s like going back again, with more experience, of course. Sometimes bitter life experiences make us better women, stronger women. Tragedy makes women stronger in life.”

Gina, former combatant of MNLF,
Interview for I Have to Speak Project (2020)

Accordingly, the active involvement of women in armed conflict does not correlate with an active and secure spot at the negotiation table, and gender inequality is still visible in all kind of roles: negotiators, mediators, signatories and witnesses (Shekhawat, 2015: 56). This represents a very real missed opportunity to improve the quality and inclusivity of the resulting agreements.

“The meaningful participation of women in peace negotiations is crucial to conclude an equitable Peace Agreement that can guarantee inclusion, a gender approach and the consolidation of peace.”

Amanda Ríos, ex-guerrillera from FARC-EP,
Public Forum VIVAS Contamos, Colombia (2021)

The reasons **why women⁵ join – or are recruited by – armed forces** are very varied and context-specific. Some might be motivated by political, religious or economic reasons, while others may be looking to protect themselves from violence or to fight for better living conditions and gender equality (KC and Van Deer Haar, 2019: 437). Indeed, women may be particularly attracted to those armed movements that pursue gender emancipatory agendas, with the aspiration to overcome traditional patriarchal structures. Their

4 See Dudouet & Lundström (2016: 8) for further explanation on inclusive peace processes: “Our proposed definition of inclusivity (or its synonymous ‘inclusiveness’) refers to the degree of access to the various arenas of political settlements by all sectors of society, beyond the most powerful (pre-war) elites – both by participating (directly or indirectly) in decision-making, or by having their concerns addressed by the state.”

5 This report focuses on the experiences of female former combatants, and other women associated with RLMs, with whom we closely work within the framework of our project. However, we acknowledge the need to further include non-binary identities in such analyses in order to go beyond the men-women dichotomy and the reduction of gender issues solely to women issues.

participation in military or support roles provide them with a sense of empowerment, by enhancing their rights and responsibilities.

“When I heard the story of women who were helplessly raped by soldiers and being killed, I told myself that Insha’Allah, when I grew up, if there was a group who were willing to train military, I would not hesitate to join so that I wouldn’t experience what our Bangsamoro sisters experienced during Martial Law. So that’s one of the reasons that pushed me to join.”

Alyah E. Salik, former combatant from MILF, Philippines,
Interview for Asking my Sisters Project (2021)

Although not a guarantee of gender-inclusive outcomes, the inclusion of female combatants in negotiation processes increases the **opportunity for these wartime aspirations to be raised at the peace table** and carried over into transitional agreements and state reform processes, translating into more equitable post-war societies. Moreover, the inclusion of these women at the peace table can ensure that DDR programs, political participation schemes and other agreement provisions targeting former combatants will be responsive to their actual needs and priorities.

The Maoist insurgency in **Nepal** is an example on how the war brought transformations into society in relation to gendered power systems in the social, economic and political spheres, creating new knowledge and opportunities for the women (Giri, 2021: 4-5). However, these wartime achievements were not brought forward into the peace process because of the isolation and marginalisation of the voices of female combatants, which is due, among other reasons, to their lack of access to internationals and other parties involved in the negotiation process.

“Even during the war, women’s command was rejected, there was hesitation to assign them with responsibilities, and questions were raised on their ability to command. We fought against so many challenges. We had to fight even then. But the good thing was that our leaders and party were clear that women could do too. The party was supportive and we moved forward. ... [During the peace process], we received support from international organisations. However, it did not play a very effective role in focusing on women or developing women in leadership... The support was scattered. It is because women coming out from the war had no access. International organisations also did not have access to them... First, there has to be access.”

Onsari Gharti Magar, former combatant and
current member of the House of Representatives in Nepal

Female combatants still face **challenges to be recognised as valid interlocutors at the negotiation table**. The patriarchal es that permeate societies worldwide hinder women’s meaningful participation. This often applies to the internal structures of RLMs, which are made up of multiple hierarchical layers with male leaders at the top and in control of the central command structures. These structures mean that women usually fill the lower-level positions within the military ranking system or are largely invisible due to their informal roles and responsibilities. We need to account for various elements that can shape the roles that women take within RLMs: “the nature of a conflict, how society is organized, what networks exist and how they are structured, historical factors, and intersectionality (the intersection of gender and ethnicity, gender

and religion, gender and class, gender and nation) in different societies can all shape the role of women in any particular conflict” (Darden, 2015: 459). The make-up of the peace table also differs from context to context, and is largely determined by the competing interests of those who have the most power and status within the negotiating parties. Military hierarchy and internal leadership structures are often replicated in delegations representing the parties at the negotiation table, which lowers the chance for women to get a meaningful seat at the table.

“Most men think that war belongs to men. The criteria to be a guerrilla fighter and leader are based on male traits. It is a man’s world and they think that making peace is also a man’s thing.”

Female ex-guerrillera from FARC-EP, Expert Talk (2020)

“The struggle is not only about being a woman but also about challenging the patriarchal society under strong militarisation.”

Shadia Marhaban, former GAM negotiator in Indonesia, Workshop in South Africa (2019)

“In the Burmese peace process, women combatants and women who have suffered from the armed conflict could not participate in the political dialogue. Women combatants knew only how to fight in battle while political dialogue needs expertise... also men thought that women should not participate in the implementation of the peace process, especially in the security sector, since women were not in an active combatant role.”

Women in RLM in Myanmar, Online Expert Talk, 2021

Exclusionary practices at the peace table also leads to the contents of peace agreements neglecting the specific needs and demands of women from RLMs.

“In the Peace Agreement there was a redistribution of land for female and male combatants. However, less than 5% of combatants who would receive the land were women. We figured out that the women were being excluded from the land distribution and we went to our male comrades to claim our rights. We organised ourselves to research why the women were being excluded (...). We discovered that males, husbands and sons had privilege over women, so the only ones could access land were women without husbands and with underaged sons. We presented the results of the research to our

comrades and we were criticised for wanting to have access to land. After a long struggle, we finally managed to ensure that 35% of the land was distributed to the women.”

Female Former Combatant from FMLN in El Salvador,
Online Expert Talk (2021)

Nowadays, many peace processes include formal mechanisms, such as **gender quotas**, to ensure the nominal participation of women. Although quotas can be effective, they are not in and of themselves a guarantee that those women at the table will have sufficient knowledge, power or interest to push for gender-inclusive provisions in an agreement. Indeed, in the case of **El Salvador**, while 30% of the negotiators were women, the peace agreement that was reached was void of gender specific provisions. Furthermore, quota mechanisms tend to benefit women from the political class or elite-based civil society. To ensure that the outcomes reached at the table best address the needs of women in RLMs, quotas and other inclusion measures must also be accompanied by targeted **technical support**, such as capacity building on peace process design, negotiation skills training, and access to external expertise. As one network member advocated, female combatants at the peace table should be supported to not only reach the same level of knowledge and skills as their male colleagues, but they should gain expertise on strategic topics that will increase their value and contribution to the negotiations. Network members have also emphasised the relevance to get access to **peer-learning** from female former combatants and women’s organisations from other countries during peace negotiations, to learn from their accumulated experiences. Unfortunately, female combatants are rarely exposed to international exchange programs that tend to primarily benefit their male comrades.

Insights about meaningful participation in negotiations from a peer-learning workshop in South Africa, 2019

“Each day I am more convinced that if women in RLMs would have learned a little bit of what we have been learning during this workshop about negotiations, post-war leadership and peace processes, we would have been more successful in strengthening the role and leadership of women in the aftermath of the conflict”.

Female ex-guerrillera from FARC-EP, Colombia

“We need to think about the kind of expectations that are associated with women’s participation in negotiations. Just because women are at the negotiation table does not necessarily mean that women’s issues are going to be a priority in the agenda.”

Female ex-guerrillera from FARC-EP, Colombia

“Even though we have female delegates who participate in the peace table, it is an issue that they are not feminists. Of course we put a lot of hopes and expectation on one woman, but sometimes if she is not a feminist, will she stand up for us?”

Woman in RLM, Myanmar

“We are not negotiators because we are women, but because we were already leaders before.”

Woman in RLM, Colombia

3 Current Practices on Post-war Transitions

As argued earlier, the low participation of women from RLMs in peace negotiations is likely to result in DDR programs that are neither inclusive, nor sensitive to gendered power dynamics. Traditionally, **DDR mandates and participant selection criteria** have relied on a narrow definition of combatants, restricted to those who hold weapons or have been active at the frontline, while neglecting other roles such as organisers, educators, social workers, strategists, construction workers, cooks, medics, nurses, spies, propagandists, communication specialists, guards, secretaries, or radio operators, among others. This practice effectively excludes women carrying out civilian functions from reinsertion schemes and cash payments for demobilised combatants (Douglas and Hill, 2004). Moreover, the international peacebuilding community too often continues to frame female combatants as victims, thus they are not considered a threat for society and the understanding is that they do not need to be included in reintegration processes. These narratives result in women being de-securitised and the attention is redirected to the “real threat” (male combatants) (Gade, 2019).

“During the war, women played an important role, they were supporting rebellion movements, carrying ammunition, they were preparing food and some of them were active in combat. Unfortunately, after the ceasefire in Burundi, there were challenges with the DDR program, which was funded by the Government in partnership with the World Bank, particularly in relation to the incorporation of women. As a result, there is a significant number of women who played an active role during the war but then did not participate in the DDR programs.”

Male former combatant, Burundi,
Online Expert Talk (2021)

The fact that DDR programs are not adapted to the needs of female combatants prevents them from accessing related **compensation schemes following their demobilisation**, and makes their reintegration more difficult. Usually, DDR programs include cash payments for supporting the economic reinsertion of demobilised combatants, but they are managed by male combatants who fail to share these resources with their ‘dependents’. Additionally, women have usually lower access to banks in many countries, which reduces their opportunities to manage cash payments (DPI, 2016). The lack of economic independence of women furthermore prevent their sound participation in community leadership and (local or national) politics.

“During the peace negotiations and after the signature of the peace agreement, we need short-term solutions to empower the women. We need capacity building and economic empowerment for the women so they can actually engage in the peace process.”

Woman in RLM, Myanmar, Online Exchange (2021)

In an effort to improve the conditions for female ex-combatants, the UN has developed guidelines on **Gender-Responsive DDR**, which acknowledges that the roles of women in armed groups can be complex, non-transparent and present different functions (UNDDR Section, 2020: 11). Along the same line, the United Nations Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS)⁶ also state that DDR eligibility criteria should avoid focusing just on the handing over of weapons and rather attend to the actual individual’s membership of an armed group, whether involved in active combat or in support roles and “take into account these different experiences, roles, capacities and responsibilities acquired during and after conflicts” (IDDRS Module 2.10, 2019: 22). The Council of the European Union has also recently published their Conclusion on an EU Strategic Approach in support of DDR, in which they highlight the “importance of realistic, flexible, conflict sensitive and age and gender responsive DDR engagements, [...] in line with the women, peace and security and youth, peace and security, children and armed conflict agendas” (Council of EU, 2022: 5).

In discussing the needs of women associated with RLMs, it is imperative to ensure that they are not reduced to a homogeneous target group. **Women have multiple identities**, ethnicity, religion, age, and class background, which intersects with their gender-based identity. Therefore, the category of ‘female ex-combatants’ should be understood as a diverse community, as each of them experiences war

differently and their interests and needs in post-war settlements will differ depending on their particular background. This reinforces the idea that ‘one size fits all’ approaches to post-war peacebuilding are deemed to fail or have limited impact on transforming the lives of women combatants (Giri, 2021: 9). By recognising the different experiences of women combatants and developing programmes that are sensitive to the intersections of gender, social class, age and ethnicity, among other aspects, inclusive peacebuilding processes are guaranteed and so is the desired of female former combatants “to reintegrate themselves into the polity as ordinary citizens” (Rahmawati, 2021: para. 53).

During reintegration processes, many women also face **stigmatisation from society**, especially when female combatants are portrayed in the public imaginary as aggressive and highly sexual (Tarnaala, 2016). They may also be perceived as having trespassed gender norms during their militancy, by taking roles which do not fit conventional visions of femininity, which contributes to social stigma. Furthermore, during reinsertion programs, the topic of gender inequality tends to be treated as a secondary priority or pushed to later phases of the DDR programs. This does not acknowledge the continuum of violence and the effects of gender inequality during and after armed conflict. DDR tends to focus on the reintegration into public life while aspects related to the private sphere are usually not incorporated into the programs. This generates a triple burden for female ex-combatants: productive, reproductive and political labour. Motherhood is not considered a priority need during DDR programs, despite being one core element conditioning effective female participation (such as childcare provisions, maternity leave, breast feeding or carework) (Steenbergen, 2020).

6 See Integrated DDR Standards, latest revised in 2019: www.unddr.org/the-iddrs/.

“It seems that we need to decide if we participate in post-war transitions either as a mother or as a woman, but the relation with our children is important. Many women do not participate because they do not want to leave the children behind.”

Woman in RLM, Workshop in Northern Iraq (2021)

“We request the economic independence of the female ex-combatants, we do not see any other way for our reintegration process. We need to have the ownership of the land. Behind a woman, there is not only one woman, there is also her family, her parents, her brothers. We are women and we want to work with an equal salary and the same job offers for men and for women. We also request the remuneration of the household carework and support of entrepreneurial projects led by female ex-combatants. For achieving this, we need capacity building support, we need to be trained and have more knowledge and studies to work in our own projects.”

Jenny, ex-guerrillera from FARC-EP, Public Forum VIVAS Contamos, Colombia (2021)

Gender stereotypical support schemes represent an additional challenge. When vocational trainings are put in place for female ex-combatants, they tend to reproduce gender roles, providing the men with trainings in masonry, carpentry, mechanics and IT, whereas the women receive training for sewing, soap making or hairdressing (Gade, 2019; Steenbergen, 2020). Women participating in our RLM Network have noted the need to receive more trainings in leadership, negotiation, advocacy campaigns, and electoral processes, among other skills that would support their effective post-war transition. The lack of adequate reintegration trainings leads to a lack of opportunities and sustainable income for female ex-combatants, which affects their self-confidence and mental health. Due to the limited choices for reintegration into the labour market, women may be induced to resort to the informal economy, including sex work, or to go back to traditional gender role, as careworkers, mothers and housewives. Another element that clearly influences the reintegration of women into the formal economy is the lack of childcare provisions. Usually all carework is done by the women, preventing them to look for labour opportunities outside their households.

With regards to political reintegration, one of the most frequent challenges that female combatants face is the fear of stigmatisation. Those who attempt to enter a political career suffer a double stigmatisation for having belonged to a guerrilla group and for speaking their mind in a patriarchal society. Many female combatants are also prevented from accessing political life because of the lack of available information and dedicated training (Tarnaala, 2016). Women also face financial hardship to run their campaigns as they lack access to key networks and fundraising channels to help them running for office. In order to face the challenges linked to party politics, female combatants often turn to informal initiatives through social activism, which offers an alternative outlet to shape public debates and contribute to policy-making.

Hence, supporting these women's political engagement through civil society organisations and social movements should be given due consideration by peacebuilding donors and agencies (Dudouet and Cruz Almeida, 2022). This includes support to female ex-combatant associations, which "actively contribute to peace-building, not only with proposals to the government but also with advocacies for a gender-responsive change from within their former insurgent organizations" (Dietrich, 2015: 240).

"I believe that society accepts more easily a man who was active in the war. Even a man who was fighting in the war can be seen at any time as a hero. But a woman, who had the audacity to take up arms against a regime, such as the Colombian regime, is going to find herself facing closed doors right from the start. It is not the same, they do not listen in the same way women's voices, like me, as the men's voices, who were also in the war."

Victoria Sandino, ex-guerrillera from FARC-EP, Senator to the Republic of Colombia, video Interview (2021)

undermine their hopes and interest in prosecuting perpetrators. Usually, as these aspects are not efficiently incorporated into the official programs, the women end up being taking upon themselves to follow up on the crimes, however they lack the required training and technical knowledge to work on prevention and treatment of GBV.

"Some women do not report [GBV perpetrators] because there is lack of safety measures, they prefer to separate from their partners but do not denounce them because their lives are at risk."

Female ex-guerrillera from FARC-EP, Colombia, Workshop on GBV (2021)

"We would like to have workshops and training on technical aspects of how to deal with GBV within IDP and refugee camps, because we need to apply this practically to our situation."

Woman in RLM, Myanmar, Online Expert Talk (2021)

In addition to stigmatisation, female former combatants and women associated with RLMs also face high levels of **physical insecurity** during the war and in subsequent transitions. Network participants have highlighted the lack of support available for women who are directly working with survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in demobilisation camps, as well as the lack of immediate response to a problem that is still not coherently incorporated in reintegration programs. In cases when GBV-related provisions are included in peace agreements and DDR programs, their implementation is hindered by slow bureaucratic processes that fail to protect survivors and

4 Lessons learned

The aforementioned studies and testimonies from women in or associated to RLMs elucidate that, in the current reality of peace negotiations and post-war transitions, female combatants are still under-represented and their needs are not prioritised in the peacebuilding agenda. Peacebuilding is deemed to be a process that ends violence and guarantees sustainable peace. However, when it reinforces or ignores gender inequality it contributes to perpetuating existing systems of oppression: “neither a meaningful decrease in societal violence nor a sustainable peace among nations is possible in human society without a decrease in gender inequality” (Hudson et al., 2012: 94). Learning from our long-standing work with women from various RLMs around the world, we have drawn out the following lessons:

On Peace Negotiations

- ≡ Sustainable and long-lasting peace in societies cannot be achieved without the inclusion of women. Peacebuilding organisations, mediators, guarantor countries, negotiation parties, civil society organisations and other international, regional and national stakeholders involved in peace negotiations and supporting peace agreements should conduct careful and regular **analysis of gendered power dynamics** within the negotiation parties. This is **particularly the case for RLMs**, whose female members need to be recognised as conflict protagonists in equal terms with their male comrades, and whose agency should be reflected and recognised at the negotiation table.
- ≡ During times of armed conflict, women acquire vast knowledge in different fields, from healthcare to gender equality work. That **knowledge should be recognised**, validated and utilised in peace negotiations and after war. Stakeholder analysis conducted with local insider experts can help **identify entry points to access female (ex)-combatants** and other women associated with RLMs, in order to understand their needs and interests, and to explore their possible contributions to a peace process.
- ≡ In order to facilitate their meaningful contribution to negotiations, relevant **support- and capacity-building opportunities** (including through tailor-made training and peer-to-peer exchange) should be provided to female combatants, to help them acquire distinct knowledge and expertise on the technical and strategic dimensions of the peace process.



- ≡ The peacebuilding community should **understand, recognize and address the triple burden (productive, reproductive and political)**, which is a unique factor that affects women’s participation in negotiations. Considering measures that look at ways to **alleviate the social, family and economic pressures on women** both during and after negotiations, support their ability to participate and emphasizes their value at the table.
- ≡ **Further research** (including through participatory methodologies) is required to understand both the challenges that pre-empt women from joining negotiation teams, and on best practices from successful contexts where their agency has been recognised or supported during peace processes.

On Post-War Transitions

- ≡ Peacebuilding programs should **move away from stereotypical and traditional depictions of female combatants** in order to avoid their exclusion and stigmatisation during peace negotiations and post-war programs, and instead enable the continuation of their struggle as political and social leaders.
- ≡ Specific attention and support should be given to **self-led community-based initiatives** by female combatants, as they represent a key driving factor for women to continue mobilizing for the full fulfilment of their rights, especially when those aspects are left out of negotiations and peace agreements. The continuation of the ‘revolutionary’ struggle for social justice through political engagement – including local, informal politics such as civil society activism or community action – should be acknowledged and encouraged as it provides peaceful channels for amplifying their voices.
- ≡ Post-war support schemes should **guarantee the safety of demobilised female combatants**. Security is paramount as it largely determines their well-being, physical and mental health, and their possibilities for socio-economic and political participation. A holistic understanding of security should also encompass the **private sphere** of reintegration, by providing adequate resources for women to take part in public and social life (e.g. childcare, motherhood).

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