

Preventing Violence through Inclusion

January 2018



The Research Project

This Briefing Note is the summary of IPTI's report "Preventing Violence Through Inclusion: From Building Political Momentum to Sustaining Peace," commissioned by the World Bank as a thematic research input into the United Nations-World Bank Study "Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict." IPTI's report analyzes when, how, and under what conditions the inclusion of a broad range of actors in peace and political transition processes contributes to the prevention of violence and armed conflict, through a comparative analysis of 47 prevention attempts reconstructed from IPTI's datasets. This work builds on previous case study research conducted in the framework of the Graduate Institute's multi-year project, "Broadening Participation."

Key Findings

- Inclusion plays an important role in preventing violence. However, how inclusion contributes to prevention depends on the kind of violence and, relatedly, the nature of political processes.
- Moreover, the causal processes that prevent or reduce violence differ at the early stages of the prevention attempt and during the transitional processes that follow, as well as according to conflict type.
- During the early phases of a prevention attempt, we found that in cases of popular protests broad-based inclusion is particularly important in reducing or halting violence.
- In situations of armed conflict, violence can initially be reduced through broadly inclusive negotiations, and in some instances relatively exclusive but representative elite deals. However, an early-stage reduction of violence does not guarantee sustainable peace in the longer term.
- During the subsequent political transitions, inclusion can help to prevent a continuation or recurrence of violence by tackling violence through a variety of bodies that help to address the causes of violence. Inclusion mattered most when the implementing bodies addressed grievances (e.g. political or economic inequality), thus aiming to resolve violence by building inclusive institutions.
- The representativeness and independence of included actors influence the degree to which inclusive bodies can prevent and reduce violence.
- A set of domestic, regional, and international context factors determines the effectiveness of inclusion.

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Inclusion in the Emerging Global Prevention Agenda

IPTI's research forms a key contribution to the emerging Global Prevention Agenda by exploring how inclusion contributes to preventing violence and sustaining peace. The **Sustaining Peace Resolution** was simultaneously adopted by the UN Security Council (S/RES/2282) and the General Assembly (A/RES/70/262) in April 2016. The preamble of the resolutions defines Sustaining Peace as “activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development.” The resolutions set out what is now understood as the **Prevention Agenda**—a clearly established priority of Antonio Guterres' tenure as UN Secretary General—which conceptualizes the shift from peacebuilding to sustaining peace through preventive action, both building on and furthering the vision put forward by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals—in particular Goal 16; the Women, Peace and Security Agenda; and UNSC Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security. The Agenda and the resolutions moreover underline the link between peace, development, and human rights, and depict Prevention as a holistic concept that identifies exclusion, inequality, and power imbalances as principal causes of conflict and violence. They also emphasize the need for inclusive national ownership, giving local actors a consistent voice and encouraging women and youth to play a critical role in preventing and mitigating conflict. The UN-World Bank “Pathways for Peace” Study significantly furthers the thinking regarding the Prevention Agenda, and highlights the central role inclusion can play in preventing violent conflict.

How can Inclusion contribute to Violence Prevention in Peace and Transition Processes?

A range of actors beyond the main conflict parties—such as civil society organizations, elites, hardliners, the armed forces, women's groups, and regional and international actors—can participate in peace and transition processes through a range of **inclusion modalities**. The inclusion modalities identified were: broader direct representation at the negotiation table, observer status, consultations, inclusive commissions, high-level problem-solving workshops, public decision-making, and mass action. Overall, we found that inclusion plays an important role in preventing violence. Importantly, how inclusion contributes to prevention depends on the **conflict type** and the **kind of violence**—displayed in cases of popular protests or armed conflict—and the nature of political processes, which span from the initial halting of violence through negotiations to the implementation of political agreements. Our findings suggest that a combination of different inclusion modalities is important for preventing violence and sustaining peace, thus indicating the merit of sequenced inclusion. The causal processes that prevent or reduce violence differ at the **early stages** of the prevention attempt and during the **transitional processes** that follow.

How Inclusion contributes to Early Prevention Efforts

In cases characterized by **popular protests** and incipient violent conflict, inclusion contributes to prevention by creating political momentum through which violence can be averted or reduced. When governments responded to protest-related violence through inclusive negotiation formats to jointly discuss the country's future, grievances voiced on the street were transferred into formal processes. This helped to prevent or reduce violence. Direct representation provided a particularly efficient way of transferring the voicing of grievances from the street to the negotiation table.

During **armed conflicts**, violence can initially be reduced through broadly inclusive negotiations, and in some instances relatively exclusive but representative elite deals. However, an early-stage reduction of violence did not guarantee sustainable peace in the longer term. For maintaining reduced levels of violence, the inclusion of actors beyond the principle conflict parties is critical, either at the negotiation table or through additional modalities, such as inclusive commissions or consultations. While negotiations between armed groups can build confidence and address immediate security concerns, broader inclusion is needed to maintain the momentum for peace and pave the way for a sustained transition.

How Inclusion Contributes to Sustaining Peace during Political Transitions

Inclusion contributes to peaceful transition processes in two main ways, depending on their **design** and **mandate**: through inclusive commissions mandated to monitor the implementation of ceasefires or peace agreements, or to ensure a **sustained absence of violence**, for instance through justice, truth and reconciliation initiatives; and through formalized bodies that **address the causes of violence** by implementing comprehensive political or constitutional reform processes. We found that inclusion mattered most when the implementing bodies addressed grievances (e.g. political or economic inequality), thus aiming to prevent violence by building **inclusive institutions**. Additional modalities, such as public decision-making in the form of referenda, also increased public support for such reform processes.

How the Representativeness and Independence of Actors Matter for Prevention

The **representativeness** and **independence of included actors** influence the degree to which inclusive bodies can prevent and reduce violence. In cases where the modalities are highly representative—i.e. the included actors spoke and acted on behalf of all stakeholders to the conflict—causes of conflict are more likely to be addressed and in turn levels of violence are reduced in a sustainable manner. The independence of included actors from the main conflict parties also affects whether the modalities function smoothly and contribute to successful prevention. Both too little and too large a degree of independence can decrease the effectiveness of inclusion modalities; both included actors that are too closely aligned with the conflict parties and included actors with positions that cannot easily be reconciled with those of the main conflict parties are unlikely to play a constructive role.

What other factors determine effective inclusion?

We also found that the following external factors are important in determining the effectiveness of inclusion modalities:

Civil society often plays a crucial role in inclusive prevention attempts. Yet, this role depends on the space available for civil society to act independently, which is often determined by the overall political climate, as well as by the severity of the conflict. The legitimacy that civil society organizations enjoy among the local population is another crucial factor. This is particularly significant for professional civil society organizations that often implement internationally-funded projects that may fail to represent the interests of the affected population. In addition, when civil society groups and movements enjoy legitimacy, they can also prove instrumental in initiating or supporting mass protests that often give rise to inclusive prevention attempts.

One further factor that influences the effectiveness of modalities in preventing violent conflict is **the behavior of political, economic, and social elites**. We found that the tendency to include elites affects the representativeness of modalities. Elites often maintain stronger ties to one or more conflict parties, thus also reducing the independence of inclusion modalities and affecting which conflict causes are addressed in a prevention attempt. Moreover, governments often exercise considerable influence on inclusive processes, through selection criteria, co-opting or capturing inclusion modalities, or agenda setting.

The existence of **hardliners** poses a considerable challenge to prevention attempts. Hardliners can be armed actors or non-armed groups lobbying for intransigent positions to pursue economic, political, or military interests. Hardliner inclusion is an important factor for the effectiveness of modalities to end or prevent violent conflict. While their inclusion is often necessary to prevent them from spoiling the process, they may complicate negotiations and make reaching an agreement more difficult.

Military actors, such as national armed forces, can enable or constrain the effectiveness of inclusion modalities during peace and transition processes. In some cases, they have played an important role in initiating transition processes and pushed for the introduction of certain modalities of inclusion. However, particularly in cases where the military has a long history of involvement in civilian affairs, they have often attempted to control inclusive processes or ignored their outcomes.

The **influence of women** in inclusion modalities has in many cases not only proved significant for the overall prevention outcomes, but also for addressing gender-specific aspects of violence. We found that the influence of women depends on, inter alia, gender quotas, broad coalitions between women bridging factional divides, independent women's delegations present during negotiations, the traditional standing of women in conflict-affected societies, and on international support.

International organizations as well as influential **regional or international state actors** frequently influence prevention attempts and the effectiveness of inclusion modalities through a combination of diplomatic and technical assistance. For example, international actors may facilitate discussions between conflict parties, push for the inclusion or exclusion of actors, or influence the setup of inclusion modalities. Alternatively, they may provide financial means, facilities, and training that support the prevention attempt.

The Inclusive Peace & Transition Initiative (IPTI) is dedicated to evidence-based research and its transfer to policy and practice. The objective of the initiative is to support sustainable peace by providing expertise and information on the inclusion of diverse actors in peace and transition processes. This expertise is drawn from a collection of research projects that have been conducted for nearly a decade at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva under the lead of Dr. Thania Paffenholz.

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