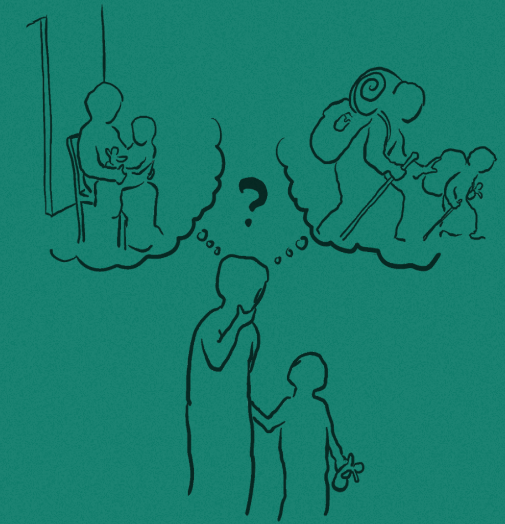




In this chapter you will find:

- **Possible Measures to Address Direct Violence Affecting Migration**
 - Local Potentials for Peace
 - An Urban First Approach to Displacement
 - Civilian-Led Monitoring and Reporting on Violations of International Humanitarian- and Human Rights Law
- **Possible Measures to Address Structural Violence Affecting Migration**
 - Closing the Gender Gap in Humanitarian Action
 - Inclusive Peace Negotiations
 - Addressing Structural Violence to Ensure a Transformative Peace
- **Possible Measures to Address Cultural Violence Affecting Migration**
 - Addressing Hate Speech
 - Strengthening Independent Public Interest Journalism
 - Strengthening Relationships between Vulnerable Groups and Potential Allies



Chapter 5

A Positive Peace Approach to Migration in Country of Origin During Violent Conflict



INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores how aspects of a positive peace approach to migration can be applied in a country of origin where there is a violent conflict. Firstly, it will identify some of the primary ways direct, structural and cultural violence affect migration. Secondly, it will explore the nexus between international migration and peacebuilding in this context. Thirdly, it will identify three actions that can be implemented to reduce direct, structural and cultural violence respectively.

It is important to emphasise that the distinction between a country with violent conflict and those addressed in other chapters is blurred. As an example, a country can experience violent conflict in some geographical areas while migrants from other countries transit through other areas in that same country. This chapter is relevant for the former context, whereas the next chapter is relevant for the latter situation. Therefore, more than one of the following chapters are likely to apply to any specific country.

In addition, it is important to underline that practices brought up in one context might also be important in other contexts. For example, a measure aiming at transforming a violent conflict might also be relevant in countries of transit or destination.

Direct, Structural and Cultural Violence Potentially Affecting Migration

In countries marked by violent conflict, direct, structural and cultural violence severely affect the daily lives of large groups of people.

The levels and kinds of direct violence experienced in situations of violent conflict leave many people fearing for their lives. Some are directly involved in the violent conflict through their affiliation with state actors, such as the police or military, or non-state actors, such as armed gangs, rebel groups, or communal militias. Others are exposed to direct violence such as raiding or bombing of their houses or attacks by snipers and other assailants. As law and order break down, civilians are left to try to protect themselves. People are unlawfully detained, murdered, tortured and beaten in camps and prisons, while some disappear never to be seen again. In many cases, sexual violence, including rape, becomes pervasive. Often, journalists and human rights activists are not able to enter violent conflict zones, leaving many acts of direct violence undocumented. In some cases, ethnic cleansing and genocide become part of a strategy to terrify local populations and force them to leave.

Many people who are forced to flee end up in overcrowded camps for internally displaced people (IDPs) or refugees, where their lives are put on hold in very challenging environments. In these situations, some groups are more affected than others. Young men are more likely to be actively involved in direct violence, while people belonging to minority groups are more likely to become victims of such violence. Nevertheless, even in situations where direct violence is very widespread, there might still be local communities that are much less affected, reflecting the unequal ways violent conflict affects people.

In violent conflicts, people are also exposed to many kinds of structural violence. Examples include violations of basic human rights such as equal access to food, education, safe housing, employment and healthcare. Schools and universities are destroyed or inaccessible because roads have been damaged or it is too dangerous to leave home. In breach of international humanitarian law, ambulances, hospitals, doctors and nurses become targets of violent attacks. This makes it very difficult to access healthcare, leading to people dying unnecessarily from injuries and preventable diseases. Employment is lost because businesses are forced to close, people are drafted to join the violence, and it becomes too unsafe to go to work. People lose their homes because they are destroyed or too dangerous to live in, forcing them to flee. Many people are unable to access humanitarian aid because not enough is provided, or because roadblocks or looting prevent trucks with food and water from reaching their intended destinations. Institutions and structures meant to help ensure equal opportunities for all people to fulfil their basic needs break down. Often the groups that faced structural violence before the violent conflict, such as people living with disabilities, women and children, and people from religious and ethnic minorities, also bear the brunt of structural violence during the violent conflict.

Cultural violence is also pervasive in violent conflicts. Examples include hate speech based on generalisations, prejudices and stereotypes being used by violent conflict actors to justify and create support for direct violence against other groups. Uncritical journalism often plays a role in spreading disinformation and hate speech, which is further exacerbated by resharing on social media. All of this leads to a breakdown in trust, social integration and cohesion within and between communities. Social institutions, such as families, meant to help uphold social norms, rules and traditions to maintain social stability and order also break down. Other social institutions, such as religious and political institutions, become divisive powers in communities, often fuelling the violent conflict. Usually, the groups of people most affected by cultural violence have no, or very little, voice in making the world outside aware of their devastating situation.

In this context, direct, structural and cultural violence are linked in many ways. Prejudices and stereotyping based on ethnicity, religion and race are used to justify why certain groups should not have access to humanitarian aid and why direct violence, such as ethnic cleansing, is necessary.

The International Migration-Peacebuilding Nexus

Being exposed to direct, structural and cultural violence during a violent conflict has a devastating impact on people's lives. In many cases, it is a very important push factor in decisions to migrate. In some contexts, such as ethnic cleansing, genocide or very heavy bombardments, migration is the only option for survival. In other cases, a lack of essentials, such as food or a safe home, forces people to leave and look for shelter elsewhere, often initially in neighbouring towns and cities that are not yet directly affected. This adds extra pressures on essential resources such as food and drinking water, which are often already scarce. Sometimes, the arrival of large groups of internally displaced people (IDPs) affects the religious and/or ethnic makeup in the towns and cities. If these identity markers are also fault lines in the violent conflict, this change can destabilise these areas further and potentially drag them into the conflict. As the violent conflict develops, the areas not involved often become fewer and fewer, or they become inaccessible because of direct violence in adjacent areas. As more areas become unsafe or overcrowded with displaced people, the need for shelter or protection outside the country increases drastically. The first port of call is often neighbouring countries, where most migrants will stay until they can return to their country of origin.

However, in some cases, people fleeing violent conflict are unable to settle temporarily in neighbouring countries because resources are already scarce and the country has already received more people than it can provide for. Sometimes, alliances between armed groups in one country and state or non-state actors in a neighbouring country can render it unsafe for some groups of people to seek help in a neighbouring country. The arrival of large groups of people from a neighbouring country can also destabilise the relationship between the countries, and potentially lead to the neighbouring country becoming actively involved in the direct violence. It is also likely to increase structural and cultural violence in the neighbouring country, especially if this country is already vulnerable to other challenges, such as poverty and climate-related hazards.

However, it is important to remember that push factors for migration are not solely based on experiences of direct, structural and cultural violence. Even in the most violent circumstances some people are unable or unwilling to leave. Sometimes, this is because of personal circumstances such as old age, living with disabilities, being a carer for someone unable to leave or lacking funds to pay for the journey. Other times, external factors, such as a lack of safe routes out or safe places to go to, force people to stay, despite their lives being in danger.

It is imperative to reiterate that a positive peace approach to migration will not aim to manage and reduce migration, preventing people from emigrating. Instead, it will aim to address and reduce the direct, structural and cultural forms of violence that are forcing people to migrate and seek peaceful living conditions elsewhere.

It is imperative to reiterate that a positive peace approach to migration will not aim to manage and reduce migration, preventing people from emigrating. Instead, it will aim to address and reduce the direct, structural and cultural forms of violence that are forcing people to migrate and seek peaceful living conditions elsewhere, thereby making migration a possible voluntary opportunity rather than a forced decision. It will also carefully consider the current situation and how direct, structural and cultural violence affect people's lives, focusing not just on a long-term solution but also on initiatives that will immediately improve lives. Finally, it will carefully and continuously consider what is already being done to reduce the three forms of violence and adapt to the changing circumstances.

Possible Measures to Address Direct Violence Affecting Migration

1. LOCAL POTENTIALS FOR PEACE¹

Although there is a general agreement that peacebuilding should be locally led, the scoping, design, planning and implementation of peacebuilding processes are still often led by international actors. Local populations are often perceived as recipients or participants rather than independent people with voice and agency. This dominant view means that local actors and activities that challenge these perceptions are often overlooked, despite well-documented examples of local communities around the world that, of their own accord, refuse to engage in direct violence, despite living in the middle of an ongoing violent conflict. These local societies, communities and groups are sometimes referred to as “local potentials for peace” or “**non-war communities**”. They are a very important way of improving the lives of local people and preventing forced migration.

Using their own conflict management mechanisms, based on their context and culture, these groups manage to stay out of the direct violence that surrounds them, or at least reduce the ways the violent conflict affects them. Non-war communities emphasise their common identity and internal unity based on shared history, experiences, norms and values which make them different from the parties to the violent conflict. Internally, these communities help run their own public services, develop inclusive, responsive and participatory decision-making processes and procedures, and implement their own policies, such as banning arms.

Externally, while still maintaining their independence, these communities engage and negotiate with the parties to the violent conflict aiming to reducing the violence. Other examples include “**zones of peace**,” which are local communities that, based on the concept of sanctuary, create safe havens to protect local people from violent conflict. Factors, such as not posing a threat to any of the parties to the conflict, minimal valuables inside the zone of peace and strong internal unity based on common values and norms, help communities keep their territory safe from violence.

WHY IT WORKS

- Local potentials for peace are important because their processes are community-led and rooted in local culture, context, norms and values. They work because they are based on important conflict transformation principles, such as nonviolence and impartiality, and they have the centrality of relationships at their core. They offer people a way of staying in their local community and being relatively safe, despite the violent conflict going on around them. Hence, they improve the lives of everyone involved, making them a very significant alternative to forced internal or external migration.

SOME POSITIVE PEACE PERSPECTIVES

From a positive peace perspective, it is important that local potentials for peace consider the way the intersecting identities of their members affect their agency and positionality. For example, it is important to find meaningful ways of engaging people living with disabilities, people with LGBTQ+ identities and those most affected by the threat of direct violence. From a post-colonial perspective, it is vital that international actors respect the significance of these communities committing to nonviolence and acting autonomously of their own accord. It is also important that any actions taken do not harm these communities.

Ways of avoiding harm include not judging their actions based on Western understandings of what works in peacebuilding, and not assuming that these communities need external support to succeed. Instead, it is important to use reflective practice, including keeping an open mind, staying curious and listening actively to these communities and respecting that they may not want any external interference at all. It is also important to find ways of sensitively extending these non-war communities across regions in order to make more communities more resilient to violent conflict. However, it is essential that these communities should be supported on the basis that they reduce the impact of direct violence on the local population rather than being supported because they might reduce external migration. Therefore, these initiatives offer local people choices in terms of whether to stay in their locality or move somewhere else.



Example of Promising Practice

The **Peace Community of San José de Apartadó**² is one of several Colombian non-war communities that enact a nonviolent position by refusing to support any of the parties to the violent conflict. It was founded by a group of farmers, supported by the bishop of the Diocese of Apartadó and Jesuit priest Father Javier Giraldo in 1997, in response to escalating direct violence against them, including killings and forced displacement. Based in the northern region of Urabá, the community keeps returning to its land despite violent attacks, including assassinations, abductions and rapes and forcible displacement. They conscientiously object to the violent conflict and maintain their right not to engage in it. As a community, they have also condemned the use of weapons and prohibited the use of alcohol and illegal drugs, and the presence of armed actors in their territory. Finally, they have refused to give information to the parties to the conflict. Instead, they have maintained their right to remain on their land and to use only nonviolence to resist being forcibly displaced or killed.

LIMITS AND CAVEATS

- Local potentials for peace are deeply rooted in local culture and context. It is important to be very cautious when trying to apply lessons learned in a different context.
- Local leadership and agency are vital preconditions for the success of these communities. It is important that external actors respect this and seriously consider how to or, perhaps more often, how not to engage with these communities.

2. URBAN FIRST APPROACH TO DISPLACEMENT³

Improving the ways of dealing with displacement is important for all people affected by direct violence because forced displacement can happen to anyone. Setting up camps for IDPs and refugees is often the default response to outbreaks of violence and other events that result in forced displacement. However, a recent mixed methods study in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Jordan and Kenya has indicated that it might be more beneficial for people to settle in urban areas rather than such camps. The study pointed out that, though living in a camp is meant to be temporary, many people end up living there for lengthy periods of time, remaining dependent on humanitarian assistance and unable to move on with their lives. The study called for the development of approaches that move beyond the emergency context with its focus on basic needs. These approaches would take a much longer perspective and focus on a good life in exile, based on displaced people's experiences and expectations. The study concluded that although some displaced people were severely affected by deprivation in urban areas, most were generally in better health, enjoyed better food security and were happier with the quality and availability of services than their counterparts living in camps. However, many displaced people living in urban areas also pointed out that high accommodation and transport costs, denial of some of their human rights and a lack of representation negatively affected their wellbeing.

The study also argued that camps are poor value for money. It called on more funding to be allocated to the development of urban areas, enabling them to absorb large groups of people in need of refuge. Finally, the study highlighted the important roles that local and national authorities play in providing opportunities for arriving migrants. For example, it is important not to have restrictions on employment that leave migrants with no choice but to accept work that is low-paid and carried out in poor conditions.

WHY IT WORKS

- An urban first approach moves the focus away from emergency measures to long-term solutions in cases where the violent conflict prevents people from returning for a long period of time, enabling them to get on with their lives rather than continue to live in limbo in a camp.
- An urban first approach offers an alternative to living in camps or migrating abroad. Therefore, it offers migrants more opportunities for where they move to.

SOME POSITIVE PEACE PERSPECTIVES

From a positive peace perspective, it is important that an urban first approach considers and accommodates the needs of all people, regardless of their intersecting identities. It is also important that it recognises the impact of intersecting identities on agency and positionality, and finds ways of ensuring the intentional and meaningful participation of all affected people in decisions regarding their resettlement. It is essential that migrants are not forced to migrate to urban areas if they prefer another option, such as migrating further afield. Ensuring inclusive participation will involve identifying and mitigating obstacles to participation. For example, it might be difficult for parents to participate if there is no childcare available, or for people living with disabilities if there are no disability-friendly access points.

People already living in these urban areas should also be meaningfully included, as they will be significantly affected when large groups of people move into their neighbourhoods. Hence, this approach must consider **relationship building**, not just between the migrants and local authorities, but also amongst the migrants, and between them and the local residents. It is especially important to consider how violent conflicts, past and present, can influence such relationships and how they can be developed or redeveloped. Where appropriate, **drawing on faith-based values**, such as compassion and welcoming the stranger, and involving faith-based actors can be helpful. An urban first approach must also carefully consider how to avoid all migrants living in specific areas, resulting in segregated neighbourhoods.



Example of Promising Practice

The '**Inclusive Cities, Communities of Solidarity**'⁴ project was a collaboration between the UNHCR, IOM and UN Habitat, supported by the EU. The project included nine cities in six countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. In response to migration from Venezuela and based on the principle "right to the city," the project aimed at facilitating the integration of migrants and empowering communities to be a part of these processes. The project also aimed to develop and strengthen legal frameworks and inclusive public policies at the national level. For example, the project supported the development and improvement of strategic national policies influencing the inclusiveness of urban neighbourhoods in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. At the city level, local authorities were assisted in ensuring that all planning activities included strategic action that considers the integration of human mobility and the promotion of local prosperity. The project also included training focused on local capacity building in support of these aims.

LIMITS AND CAVEATS

- More research is needed to support the claim that an urban first approach is better than camps. This should explore the needs of migrants in their new urban setting to enable them to improve their wellbeing, as well as establish a sustainable life in exile.
- Many of the urban areas that are near to violent conflicts, and hence likely to be the first port of call for migrants, are in countries that are already in financial difficulties. Significant external funding is needed for these urban areas to develop in ways that can sustainably accommodate large groups of migrants.
- Migrating to an urban area in a neighbouring country must be a voluntary choice for all migrants to make.

3. CIVILIAN-LED MONITORING AND REPORTING ON VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS LAW ⁵

Monitoring and reporting violations of international humanitarian and human rights law during times of violent conflict are imperative, in order to help prevent further violations and thereby reduce the direct violence that might otherwise escalate to a level where local people are forced to migrate. Monitoring can also warn local populations when the violence is escalating towards a point where they might be forced to migrate. Reporting is essential in ensuring **accountability** for the violations.

Monitoring and documenting of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law are often carried out by international rapporteurs from the UN. However, in many places, these international rapporteurs are denied access to the areas where the worst violations are being committed. Civilian-led monitoring and documentation enables local people to report on violations being committed against civilians, either instead of international monitoring and documentation or as an enhancement to it. Civilians use communication technology to report on violations. Such systems enhance international efforts because they can provide immediate real-time information from all levels of society and many different perspectives, including from people whom international monitors are unable to speak to. This wealth of information enables **triangulation**, providing different sources to verify information. Civilian-led monitoring and documentation relies on local knowledge and skills, such as language skills which are especially important in contexts where many different languages are spoken. It is moreover inclusive because it relies on the use of digital communication tools, such as mobile phones, that are now widely available to facilitate the exchange of information. It is important that civilian-led monitoring processes includes procedures for quality control, verification, ethics and security.

WHY IT WORKS

- Civilian-led monitoring and documentation works because it places local people at the centre of collecting and sharing information about violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, acknowledging their vital voice and agency.
- Compared to international monitoring, civilian-led monitoring is both less costly and provides more reliable information because many more people can be involved in the process.
- Monitoring and documentation are important for all people affected by violent conflict because they help prevent further direct violence and warn local residents of any potential intensifications in their area that might lead to forced migration.
- If carried out in accordance with legal standards, this approach can also be used as evidence to ensure accountability.

SOME POSITIVE PEACE PERSPECTIVES

From a positive peace perspective, it is important that civilian-led monitoring and documenting activities are inclusive. This includes finding ways of including people who either do not have access to digital communication tools, such as mobile phones, or who are unable to use them. These groups might include people who cannot afford a mobile phone, people living in rural areas with no phone coverage and people living with certain disabilities unable to use mobile phones. From a gender perspective, it is not only important that the project includes people with different gender and intersecting identities. It is also essential that the projects acknowledge all the different kinds of crimes committed against these groups and that it is recorded that they were purposefully targeted because of their intersecting identities.

It is also important to recognise that the local people most affected by direct violence are unlikely to be able to take part in civilian-led monitoring and documenting activities. This might be because it is too dangerous for them to leave their home or because they are already living in temporary shelters, struggling to survive on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, no-one should feel forced to take part in monitoring and documentation of violations of human rights. These activities must also be adequately supported. As an example, local people involved should be given adequate training and resources, enabling them to collect information in ways that ensure it can be used as evidence in potential future transitional justice mechanisms, such as trials. It is also important that the information is not just stored away somewhere, but used immediately to advocate for an end to the violence.

From a post-colonial point of view, it is important to remember that, though human rights are often referred to as ‘universal’, they are based on a Western understanding of rights established in the twentieth century. Hence, they may not adequately reflect the reality in which civilian monitors find themselves. This is perhaps especially the case concerning rights related to the environment and climate change, since these are relatively new concerns that are yet to be properly embedded in international humanitarian and human rights law.



Example of Promising Practice

Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights’ project, **Strengthening Legal Protection for Civilians and Promotion of Reparation for Violations in Iraq**,⁶ focuses on securing civilian rights in Iraq. Taking a non-sectarian approach to civilian protection, one part of the project focuses on enabling civilian activists and civil society organisations to monitor and document violations securely. The project focuses on training these activists in human rights and in how they can monitor, document and report human rights abuses through the Ceasefire platform. So far 3,800 allegations of violations have been submitted to the platform, recognising the voice and agency of ordinary Iraqis who witness or experience abuse- especially in areas previously controlled by ISIS.

LIMITS AND CAVEATS

- Civilian-led monitoring and documentation of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law is only ethical if it does not put local civilians at risk of retaliation from the people committing the abuse.
- Civilian-led monitoring and documentation is only possible if civilians can safely leave their homes, and if their basic needs are met. At the height of a violent conflict, where daily life is about finding food and staying unharmed, civilians cannot be expected to participate in monitoring and documenting violations. This might result in violations being extensively reported in some areas, where there is less violence, but not at all in other areas where the violence is more severe, potentially providing a skewed picture of the situation on the ground.
- Civilian-led monitoring and documentation only makes a real difference if it is acted upon.

Possible Measures to Address Structural Violence Affecting Migration

1. CLOSING THE GENDER GAP IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION⁷

Women and girls are disproportionately affected not only by direct violence during times of violent conflict, but also by structural violence. One of the important ways many women and girls are affected by structural violence is by **unequal access to humanitarian assistance**. Examples include exclusion from or limited access to food, healthcare, education and employment. In many cases, factors such as food hierarchies and personal safety prevent women and girls from accessing the food that is supplied as humanitarian aid, thus contributing to their malnutrition. In addition, limited or no access to appropriate healthcare adapted to their specific needs contributes to **higher mortality rates** for women and girls, especially mothers and babies. Women and girls are often **excluded from the decision-making processes** that determine how humanitarian assistance is provided. These gender inequalities persist despite the many ways women and girls can enhance humanitarian action to the benefit of the whole community. For example, women often play a key role in ensuring that their families and communities get through crises, and local groups of women are often favourably placed to mobilise change.

According to UN Women, the following ideas can help close the gender gap in humanitarian assistance:

1. Compliance with policies and frameworks on women's rights and gender equality;
2. Ensuring that all programmes and projects providing humanitarian assistance are gender responsive and prioritise gender equality;
3. Guaranteeing universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and rights;
4. Acknowledging women and girls as agents and leaders of change and including them intentionally and meaningfully in all aspects of humanitarian action.

WHY IT WORKS

- Closing the gender gap works because it is an essential step towards eradicating structural violence against women and girls.
- Intentionally and meaningfully including women and girls in all aspects of humanitarian action works because it can help ensure that the implemented changes are transformative and, hence, significantly reduce structural violence.

SOME POSITIVE PEACE PERSPECTIVES

From a positive peace perspective, it is important to consider how women with more complex intersectional identities are even further disadvantaged by inequality in humanitarian action, and that these inequalities are recognised and addressed. As an example, ensuring gender equality in access to food is not going to help women living with disabilities if their disabilities continue to prevent them from accessing food. Actions taken should not just focus on changing programmes and projects, but also on changing the social norms that support gender inequality. In addition, it is essential that women's and girls' groups, organisations and alliances are recognised as the driving force behind these changes. Their voices and agency are essential in ensuring that the changes are transformational, that they are sensitive to the local context and that they are owned by the local community. Reflective and value-based practice such as compassion, active and collective listening and staying open-minded can help identify different understandings of key issues and how they should be addressed.



Example of Promising Practice

UN Women⁸ runs a programme in camps for Syrian refugees in Jordan aiming at reducing structural violence against the women living there. The project focuses on providing women with employment opportunities to aid their economic empowerment as a gateway to social and political empowerment. It provides safe spaces where women and girls can gain life skills, such as linguistic and technological literacy. The programme also provides cash for work opportunities, child daycare, schooling and women's healthcare. Women are also involved in committees with representatives from the different communities, service providers and camp management. The project facilitates dialogue sessions between men and women on addressing domestic violence, and provides capacity building for women in order to enhance community engagement and leadership.

LIMITS AND CAVEATS

- Changing cultural violence, especially the social norms that underpin gender differences in access to essential resources, takes time.
- Focusing on women's empowerment risks shifting the focus to changing women rather than on changing the structural obstacles in social systems and structures. The core issue is not that women do not have voice and agency, but that their voice and agency are often not acknowledged nor valued. Women should not have to change to fit into male-dominated structures and systems. Instead, the systems and structures need to be transformed to ensure equal status and appreciation for men and women.

2. INCLUSIVE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS⁹

Guidance from the UN on how to ensure that peace processes are inclusive highlights the importance of **representing and integrating the views and needs of all** people affected in both the process and the outcomes¹⁰. Hence, this sub-section will focus on inclusion in the process, whereas the next section will focus on inclusion in the outcomes.

Historically, peace negotiations have only included the main perpetrators of direct violence in the violent conflicts. These have often been political and military leaders, as well as representatives from armed groups- in most cases all middle-aged men. Much less attention has been given to the people responsible for the structural violence that significantly impacted local people before and during the violent conflict, nor to the cultural violence that justified the structural and direct violence. Hardly any attention has been given to all the people affected by the direct, structural and cultural violence, thus once again exposing them to structural violence in the form of exclusion from important political processes.

In recent years, however, the importance of a much more inclusive approach has been recognised and reflected in current UN agendas such as the Prevention and Sustaining Peace Agenda, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, and the Youth Inclusion Agenda. The assumption is that if peace negotiations include a wide variety of people, more voices will be heard and more experiences and perspectives included, enriching the peace negotiations. It is also assumed that being included in the peace negotiations increases the likelihood of more people supporting the negotiations and their outcomes, which increases prospects for the development of durable peace.

Among these important stakeholders are migrants, including IDPs, refugees and asylum seekers. Often, these are not only the people who have been most affected by the direct violence, but also the main victims of the structural and cultural violence. Hence, their experiences enable them to offer key insights on not only direct violence, but also on structural and cultural violence. This provides a broader understanding of the root causes of the violent conflict, which can aid the peace negotiations and suggest better ways forward. **Involving migrants** in peace negotiations is also an important step away from seeing them as passive receivers of aid and support without any independent agency.

Including all stakeholders, including migrants, in peace negotiations is essential because of their unique experiences of, and perspectives on, direct, structural and cultural violence.

WHY IT WORKS

- Including all stakeholders, including migrants, in peace negotiations is essential because of their unique experiences of, and perspectives on, direct, structural and cultural violence. These perspectives can help provide a more comprehensive understanding of the violent conflict and how it should be addressed.

SOME POSITIVE PEACE PERSPECTIVES

From a positive peace perspective, the vast diversity among all groups of people, including migrants, should be acknowledged, in terms of experiences, perspectives, needs and interest. Therefore, it is important to consider how this diversity can be represented, and to critically assess the legitimacy of the people who claim to represent different groups. This means focusing on both **horizontal and vertical participation**. For example, it is not enough to involve national interest groups that might not adequately represent the views and perspectives of local communities.

It is important to acknowledge everyone's agency and positionality, including migrants, and how these influence their prospects for participating or being meaningfully represented in the peace negotiations. For example, it is likely to be easier for a well-off migrant who has settled in Europe to engage in peace negotiations than someone who is stuck in a refugee camp in a neighbouring country. Furthermore, the way in which intersecting identities affect participation in peace negotiations should also be considered. A young woman living with a disability and belonging to a LGBTQ+ community is likely to face many more obstacles to participation than a heterosexual, middle-aged man. From a gender perspective, it is necessary to consider how women's groups, organisations and alliances can play a key role in the peace negotiations.

Considering that most participants in negotiations will have experienced direct, structural and cultural violence, their trauma is likely to hinder exchanges with the perpetrators of the direct violence which they experienced. Some people, including some migrants, may have been both victims and perpetrators. In addition, they may have been affiliated with opposing sides in the violent conflict, which further complicates participation and representation. Hence, it is important to consider the relationships between different groups of people and avoid assuming that members of different groups share the same needs and interests, or that they get along simply because they come from the same community.



Example of Promising Practice

The **Colombian peace process** remains a model example of engaging the diaspora and civilian victims residing outside the country in peace negotiations. Talks in Havana between the Colombian government and the guerrillas (2012-2016) gave the peace process renewed optimism and momentum. This motivated Colombians living abroad to launch organisational and advocacy initiatives that would enable them to be viable agents of change and have a voice in the peace process. Throughout the years of negotiations, the diaspora worked with established organisations and held public hearings in major cities such as Brussels, London and Berlin, where they voiced their perspectives to the Colombian legislative bodies. Colombian women in the diaspora also created dedicated spaces with hubs in several cities to discuss their specific concerns. Both structured and spontaneous initiatives launched by Colombians abroad had a significant impact on the peace process. This resulted in several Colombian state institutions and bodies creating dedicated spaces to facilitate diaspora participation. These include the National Council for Peace, Coexistence, and Reconciliation and the National Victim Participation Table, in addition to the bodies that stemmed from the peace agreement, focusing on truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.¹¹ The start of that process involved bringing in multiple stakeholders; victims of violence, combatants, indigenous people living in the midst of violence, civil society organisations, international organisations, and so on. The process also included many other minority groups, such as ex-guerrillas, indigenous and Afro-Colombian women and people from the various LGBTQ+ communities.

LIMITS AND CAVEATS

- The operationalisation of inclusion in peace negotiations is complex, and questions on who, how, when and where different actors should be included are contentious and challenging to resolve.
- Dominant political stakeholders are likely to support the inclusion of stakeholders that support them, but oppose the inclusion of stakeholders that do not.
- It is important to consider how to avoid specific groups, such as migrants, being represented by a few dominant interest groups that do not adequately represent their many different views, experiences and interests.

3. ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE TO ENSURE A TRANSFORMATIVE PEACE

Peace negotiations often focus much more on addressing direct violence than structural violence. Though tackling direct violence is obviously significant, it is important to remember that it is closely interlinked with, and supported by, structural violence. Hence, to end direct violence, it is vital to tackle structural violence as well in order for it to benefit all who have been affected by the violent conflict. Therefore, incorporating diverse groups in peace negotiations is not in itself enough to ensure that the planned peacebuilding process will transform the conditions of those affected by the violent conflict, including those forced to leave.

Addressing structural violence should be on the agenda of the peace negotiations and not overshadowed by the need to address the much more visible direct violence.

Addressing structural violence should be on the agenda of the peace negotiations and not overshadowed by the need to address the much more visible direct violence. Otherwise, the peace agreement will merely reduce the direct violence, but not significantly transform the conditions that led to and sustained the violent conflict. Hence, it is important to identify the many ways structural violence affect people's daily lives, including how it hinders them from equally accessing essential resources. Migrants' experiences and perspectives are crucial in this process.

It is vital that the peace negotiations focus on developing a framework for how these different kinds of structural violence can be addressed in ways that significantly transform and improve the lives of people affected by them. Migrants and other stakeholders need to feel that they are a part of the planning and implementation of the peacebuilding process which meaningfully considers their understanding of peace, rather than a peace that they have no connection to and that will not significantly improve their lives. Migrants' experiences and perspectives can help ensure that the peacebuilding process is implemented in ways that **prevent further forced displacement** and that prioritise a swift and safe return and reintegration of migrants wanting to return to their country of origin.

WHY IT WORKS

- A durable peace is a peace that significantly transforms the lives of people for the better. Addressing all the different forms of structural violence is a vital part of this process and this is more likely if the needs of all those affected are understood.
- Meaningful participation of migrants in peace negotiations will help ensure that the structural violence that affected them is addressed in ways they can significantly influence, ensuring that it encompasses their notion of peace and peace-building.

SOME POSITIVE PEACE PERSPECTIVES

From a positive peace perspective, it is important to consider how intersecting identities affect the ways people experience structural violence. As an example, a migrant belonging to the national majority ethnic group and religion is likely to have been less affected by structural violence than a migrant belonging to a minority ethnic group and religion. Therefore, peace negotiations should focus on all the different kinds of structural violence and not just what has been experienced by members of the larger groups.

From a gender perspective, it is important to focus on the often unique ways structural violence has affected people with different genders. It is also important to consider how varying experiences of structural violence have affected the relationships between individuals, as well as groups, and how these can be transformed. Since structural violence has often been implemented by local and national institutions and authorities, it is necessary to focus on how their relationship with the people affected by the structural violence, including migrants, can be rebuilt. From a post-colonial perspective, it is vital that Western understandings of what a transformative peace looks like and entails do not overshadow local understandings of what an inclusive transformative peace looks like and what it includes.



Example of Promising Practice¹²

The **2016 Colombian Peace Agreement** aimed to end the armed conflict between the Colombian state and the largest of the armed groups known as FARC (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). The agreement purposefully addressed the structural violence experienced by people with intersecting identities such as gender, race, class and ethnicity. It especially paid attention to issues faced by women and LGBTQ+ people, as indicated by 130 out of 578 provisions having a gender focus. It also particularly addressed experiences of structural violence in rural areas, and thus included provisions on the allocation of land to landless peasants and social development in rural communities.

LIMITS AND CAVEATS

- Plans for a transformative peacebuilding process that address structural violence will only make a significant difference if support, commitment and resources are available for their implementation.
- Transformative peacebuilding processes will only lead to positive outcomes if they are sensitive to the local context and include local people, including migrants.

Possible Measures to Address Cultural Violence Affecting Migration During Violent Conflict

1. ADDRESSING HATE SPEECH¹³

According to the United Nations' Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, hate speech refers to: "any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor." Stereotyping, stigmatisation, scapegoating and derogatory language are all different kinds of hate speech. In addition to being used to support and promote disinformation and conspiracy theories, hate speech can be used to **incite discrimination, hostility and violence**, including serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

Hate speech is a form of cultural violence that can be used to justify structural and direct violence against individuals and groups defined by identity markers such as race, religion and ethnicity. It can directly (because people feel threatened by the hate speech) or indirectly (because hate speech has led to hate crimes) contribute to individuals thinking that migration is their only option. Hate speech harms not only individuals, but also relationships amongst people and communities. Therefore, it is in everyone's interest to counter hate speech. In recent years, social media has played an important role in quickly and widely spreading hate speech. In Myanmar, social media platforms, such as Facebook, have been used to spread hateful and dangerous misinformation used to promote and justify violence against the Rohingya minority, leading to many Rohingya being forcibly displaced¹⁴.

The **companies** that own the social media platforms play a key role in preventing the spread of hate speech. They can ensure that their algorithms do not accelerate hate speech, their moderators can fact-check the information shared, and they can delete posts and accounts that incite violence. However, so far, social media companies have not done everything in their power to effectively stop and prevent hate speech. The **state** is another actor that can play a key role in countering hate speech. States can regulate social media platforms, provide legal frameworks that ban hate speech and ensure accountability for any breaches.

Individuals can also play an important role. According to the UN's guidance on how to deal with hate speech, there are eight actions people can take¹⁵. Firstly, people should pause before making and sharing comments. Secondly, people should fact-check the information they share. Thirdly, people should also call out when they see hate speech being shared, declaring that they do not agree with the content and, when possible, provide reliable information that counters the hate speech. Hate speech can also be reported to the administrators and moderators of the social media platforms. People can spread positive messages to counter the hate speech in order to help change the narratives that the hate speech is trying to promote. In addition, people can publicly speak out for the individuals and communities targeted by hate speech. People can talk to family and friends about how harmful hate speech is and how it can be countered, as well as joining civil society groups aiming at addressing hate speech in their community.

WHY IT WORKS

- Countering hate speech helps ensure that cultural violence, such as stereotyping, scapegoating and stigmatisation, does not permeate the general perceptions of specific groups of people which can ultimately damage the relationships between different groups to the detriment of all affected.
- Countering hate speech that incites and justifies structural and direct violence can also help prevent their further spread and consequently, the escalation of the violent conflict, benefitting everyone affected.

SOME POSITIVE PEACE PERSPECTIVES

From a positive peace perspective, it is important to consider how people's positionality affects their ability to counter hate speech. Whereas it is relatively easy to report a post to a social media platform anonymously, it can be much more challenging to take visible and identifiable actions, such as posting counter information or speaking out for the people being targeted by hate speech. It can also be difficult to counter hate speech publicly if powerful local community leaders, religious actors and politicians are the ones spreading the hate speech. Social norms regarding authority in families might also make it difficult for women and young people to educate older, especially male, family members about the harm caused by hate speech. Any measures taken must be sensitive to the local context, since words that are considered highly offensive in one context might not be controversial in another.

Additionally, such measures should take into account the ways hate speech damages relationships. From a post-colonial perspective, it is important to focus on hate speech not only in English or a dominant language, but also in all local languages. For example, any software developed for automatic detection of hate speech should be able to detect hate speech in all local languages. Local communities play a vital role in defining what is considered hate speech and offensive.



Example of Promising Practice¹⁶

In Myanmar, the nationalist Buddhist monk Wirathu and his MaBaTha organisation were heavily involved in spreading hate speech against Muslim minorities. In response, the Buddhist State Sangha of Myanmar banned him from delivering public speeches, distanced themselves from him and banned his organisation. Moderate Buddhist monks formed an interfaith alliance with Hindu and Christian religious leaders to combat hate speech and incitement to direct violence. Cardinal Charles Bo warned other religious leaders about the dangers of spreading hate speech and urged the government to prevent it and to increase support for communities targeted by it. Actions included bringing 100 leaders from different religious communities together to help coordinate their efforts with other civil society groups already involved in countering hate speech. Another example is the Panzagar campaign led by human rights activist and former political prisoner, Nay Phone Latt. This campaign aimed to raise awareness about the dangers of using violent language and hate speech using creative character illustrations and Facebook pages to engage wider audiences.

LIMITS AND CAVEATS

- Speaking out against hate speech can be unsafe in violent conflicts where it is used by powerful majorities.
- Reporting of hate speech to social media platforms is only effective if the platforms take timely actions to delete the messages and the accounts that are spreading hate.

2. STRENGTHENING INDEPENDENT PUBLIC INTEREST JOURNALISM¹⁷

Public interest journalism focuses on issues of general shared interest such as equality, justice and human rights. It aims to inform public debate with inclusive content that challenges taboos, stereotypes and discriminatory social norms enabling the general public to make informed judgments and decisions. Hence it has an important role to play in combating cultural violence, benefitting all people affected by violent conflict, since among others it counters harmful narratives used to radicalise individuals, turn groups against each other and incite violence. Therefore, it can also help prevent local conditions from becoming so unbearable that the people, affected by not only the cultural violence, but also the direct and structural violence it justifies, think that migration is their only option.

Considering the many cases where members of a minority group have been falsely accused on being responsible for a violent incident, leading to their whole group being attacked, it is vital that journalists are able to report accurately on these stories in ways that discourage further violence. Prerequisites¹⁸ for good public interest journalism include respect for fundamental rights and media freedom, public funding and support for not-for-profit media outlets. It also includes supporting local journalists in developing essential skills such as fact-finding and inclusive investigative journalism as well as promoting collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders.

WHY IT WORKS

- Independent public interest journalism can play a vital role in countering harmful narratives that are used to justify discrimination and violence against specific identity groups, leading to violence affecting many people and leaving some to think that migration is their only option.
- Independent public interest journalism can also call out politicians and other important actors who engage in cultural violence.

SOME POSITIVE PEACE PERSPECTIVES

From a positive peace perspective, it is important that journalists include the experiences of people most affected by cultural violence in their reporting of how different forms of cultural violence affect these communities. In addition, people from these communities should be encouraged and supported in becoming journalists themselves, and moreover have their perspectives and skills appreciated in mainstream media. Furthermore, journalists should draw attention to how intersecting identities influence people's exposure to cultural violence, often making people with more complex identities much more affected.

From a gender point of view, it is important to report on how cultural violence affects genders differently, and especially how women are disproportionately impacted. In places with many diverse incidences of cultural violence, it is important that extensive cultural violence against a group defined by one identity marker does not detract attention from other minority groups, who are also affected. As an example, if there is extensive cultural violence against a minority religious group, it is still vital to report on cultural violence targeted at LGBTQ+ communities and people living with disabilities. Ultimately, journalists have a significant role to play in highlighting the importance of nonviolence.



Example of Promising Practice

The London-based **Media Diversity Institute**¹⁹ focuses on promoting accurate and nuanced reporting on identity markers, such as age, disability, gender, sexual identity, ethnicity, race, religion and class, internationally. Based on the values of diversity and inclusion and the principles of freedom of expression, their practical training and workshops centre on developing skills to improve public interest journalism. They especially engage with journalists covering minority groups in their country, and media activists who want to bring minority stories into mainstream media.

LIMITS AND CAVEATS

- In contexts plagued by violent conflict, freedom of the press and of expression are often curbed.
- Engaging in public interest journalism in the context of violent conflict can be very dangerous. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists²⁰ 1,031 journalists died covering politics, human rights and crimes from 1992-2024 globally. Many more journalist have also faced threats of physical violence aimed at silencing them.

3. STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN VULNERABLE GROUPS AND POTENTIAL ALLIES²¹

Allies can play a vital role in countering cultural violence by **advocating on behalf of the victims**. This might not only reduce the cultural violence, but also the direct and structural violence, thereby de-escalating the violent conflict. This benefits everyone and might result in people feeling less inclined to see migration as their only option. In situations of violent conflict, allies can also help ensure that the **situation does not escalate** into destructive mass atrocities based on identity, such as ethnic cleansing or genocide. For example, they may be able to deter those considering perpetrating acts of ethnic cleansing or genocide by raising their concerns with international media outlets and institutions, such as the UN Security Council or the International Criminal Court.

The relations between vulnerable groups and external actors can manifest itself in different ways, such as professionally or personally, i.e., with their diaspora or trading partners, or between different groups with a shared interest, i.e. two minority communities or women from different backgrounds. Hence, building, maintaining and strengthening relationships between groups and communities most exposed to cultural violence, and internal and external actors, can be very significant in countering cultural violence.

WHY IT WORKS

- Internal and external actors with good relationships with vulnerable communities can help raise awareness about the serious cultural violence that is endangering lives and, if left unaddressed, will forcibly displace people.
- Different communities facing the same cultural violence can become allies in the struggle to advocate for their rights to a peaceful life, unthreatened by cultural violence that forces people out.

SOME POSITIVE PEACE PERSPECTIVES

From a positive peace point of view, it is important that the voices of those marginalised groups experiencing devastating cultural violence are heard, including those without any powerful external allies. Allies should take an inclusive approach to include the groups and communities they associate with. For example, if a religious actor acts as an ally to groups of IDPs that are all equally affected by the cultural violence, it is important that they speak out on behalf of all people affected, not just those with whom they feel a religious affiliation. Otherwise, there could be a negative impact on the relationships between different religious groups within the same community of IDPs because some are heard while others are not.

From a post-colonial and gender point of view, it is important that the use of allies to speak on behalf of communities does not further diminish the agency of people who are already marginalised. Instead, the agency of people most affected by the cultural violence, and whose lives might be in danger, should be elevated and they should be involved in all decisions that affect them.



Example of Promising Practice

After Portugal left Timor-Leste²³ in 1975, neighbouring Indonesia claimed the territory. During the following years, direct and structural violence killed 200,000 local Timorese, constituting a quarter of the population. After most Timorese voted for independence 24 years later, the Indonesian military killed thousands of local Timorese. The vast majority of Timorese are Catholics and the Catholic Church played a key role in the struggle for independence. Not only did local nuns, priests and bishops risk their lives to defend local people, prominent members of the Catholic Church residing in other countries also acted as allies. Among others, Archbishop Jean Louis Tauran, who was the Vatican secretary for relations with states, raised awareness of the atrocities and called for the deployment of an international peacekeeping force to protect civilians. The acting Bishop of the capital, Dili Carlos Belo, was jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for raising international awareness about the situation in Timor Leste. In the Autumn of 1999, the UN finally deployed a peacekeeping mission to restore law and order, and assist people who had become internally displaced or refugees. In 2001, the Timorese went to their first elections and within a year, more than 200,000 refugees had returned and Timor Leste was finally recognised as an independent country by the UN.

LIMITS AND CAVEATS

- Allies' call for action to counter cultural violence and prevent escalations into ethnic cleansing and genocide is often not heard and acted upon by international actors. Examples of groups and communities under threat, and where very little action has been taken despite raised awareness, include Palestinians in Gaza, Rohingya in Myanmar and Uyghur in China.
- Being an ally, especially an internal ally to groups and communities facing cultural violence, can be dangerous.

Endnotes

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