

Understanding peace processes

1 Peace, no armed conflict
Peace, based on democracy and respect for human rights, prevails. Conflicts exist on different levels and are resolved without resorting to violence or repression.



2 Tensions
Tangible tensions manifest in violent clashes or state repression. At all societal levels, people increasingly revert to violence to resolve conflicts or disputes.



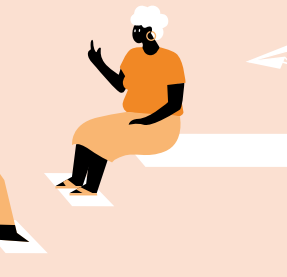
3 Armed conflict without peace intent
Violent conflict has broken out. The parties to the conflict have no intentions to resolve the conflict without violence but focus on military victory.



4 Peace negotiations
Formal peace negotiations based on specific agendas are taking place. Humanitarian or ceasefire agreements may be reached to create trust between the negotiating parties.



5 Beginning talks
Preparations are underway for official peace negotiations. The circumstances and conditions for these to be held are being negotiated.



6 Armed conflict with peace intent
Despite the ongoing armed conflict, the parties show willingness to negotiate, and a critical mass of the population is actively calling for a non-violent solution to the conflict.



7 Peace agreement
Successful peace negotiations conclude with a formal agreement, comprehensive or partial, signed by the parties to the conflict. Sub-groups might continue violent action.



8 Implementation of a peace agreement
The short- to medium-term implementation of an agreement focuses on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, establishes new structures and addresses truth-finding.



9 Post-conflict reconciliation
The long-term quest for structural transformation opens the space for truth-seeking, transitional justice, reconciliation, reparation, finding missing persons, and guarantees of non-repetition.



What are peace processes?

What images do the words “peace processes” evoke in your mind? Do you imagine years of negotiations culminating in a ceremony where the parties to the conflict sign an agreement, followed by a photo of the handshake that goes around the world? We have scrutinised and deconstructed this common image and taken an in-depth look at peace processes, as well as the question: “How do women influence peace processes?” The result of this work is a graphic representation of the different stages of peace processes. With this tool, we want to focus on the role women play and where they exert influence to drive peace processes and prevent setbacks.

A puzzle made up of several steps

Peace processes are never linear but take place in stages or phases that often overlap, without a clear timetable. A peace process is more of a puzzle made up of several successive small steps than a large, meticulously planned attempt to end a conflict based on a manual. At any stage it can go off track – even after a peace agreement has been signed – and suffer setbacks.

Adding feminist visions to the narratives

This graphic illustration shows this complexity without claiming to present a universally applicable model. Rather, it is intended to raise questions, facilitate analytical debate and encourage the addition of feminist visions to conventional narratives.

In all phases and in different contexts, we accompany women’s diverse peace work, taking into account the specific needs and risks. We are convinced that if we walk the paths to peace together with partners and affected women, the paths may not be easier, but will perhaps be shorter.

Instrument for feminist peacebuilding

How women influence peace processes

The influence of women and their roles in a peace process – they take centre stage in the illustration – are just as diverse as the women themselves. They are not only negotiators, mediators, signatories and facilitators in peace negotiations. From our many years of experience and from working with our partners and peace activists in different contexts, we know that women play diverse roles in all nine stages of the process:

In peace time or in contexts where tensions exist (stages 1-2) – using Brazil and Indonesia as examples – they influence political debate and agendas, recognise potential for conflict and actively prevent the emergence of tensions and clashes or outbreaks of violence.

During an armed conflict (stages 3-4) – using Ukraine as an example – they advocate non-violent conflict transformation and call for peace negotiations and the renunciation of enemy stereotypes. They run contact centres for victims, create trust between the parties to the conflict and promote peace intentions that are acceptable to the majority.

During formal negotiations (stages 5-7) – using the example of Colombia – they demand the inclusion of diverse visions and the participation of women in the talks and formulate gender-equitable provisions.

After the end of a conflict (stages 8-9) – using Nepal and the Philippines as examples – they play a key role in monitoring implementation, winning majorities in favour of peace and taking an active role in truth-finding processes. They lead initiatives for reconciliation and initiate structural change by calling for a critical examination of taboo subjects and non-repetition.