

Creating an Inclusive Peace Process in Darfur

A model for increasing women's participation

A robust, inclusive peace process is needed to resolve the conflict in Darfur. Key constituencies were excluded from negotiation of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). As a result, a year after its signing, most Darfurians reject the agreement and few of its provisions have been implemented. To create a durable agreement, groups such as Arab tribes, communities of internally displaced persons (IDPs), and women must be involved in all efforts to resolve the conflict.

Women's inclusion in a renewed Darfur political process is particularly critical. They, like other marginalized constituencies, have a tremendous stake in resolving the conflict and bring distinct and vital perspectives. Women are at the forefront of peace-building efforts such as securing the IDP camps, and pressing for a ceasefire. They have also assumed new roles as heads of household, in which they are responsible for the well being of their families and communities, even as they suffer severe hardship. Women's participation is needed to end hostilities, negotiate a sustainable peace agreement, and reconstruct Darfur.

To ensure women have a strong voice, the African Union and United Nations should require all parties to the negotiations, including their own mediating teams, comprise at least 25 percent women. They should also endorse implementation of the following model to increase women's participation. If replicated to bring in other stakeholder groups, this approach would amplify the voices for peace and build broad support and wider buy-in for a durable agreement.¹

Steps

1. Convene Meetings with Women at the Community Level: Mid-2007

Organize grassroots community assemblies across Darfur to discuss the DPA, enable women to articulate their priorities, and select women representatives for subsequent regional consultations.

2. Hold Regional Consultations with Women Leaders: Late 2007

Hold five consultations with separate constituents: three in Darfur (North, South, and West), one in Khartoum, and one outside of Sudan for Darfurian refugees and others living in the diaspora. Consultations include women from: community assemblies (Step 1); the three Darfurian state assemblies; IDP and refugee camps; municipal government; civil society groups aiding development; humanitarian relief organizations; human rights organizations; academia; and the media. Participants should also represent a wide range of ethnicities, tribes, and geographic regions. UN and AU mediators, negotiating party

¹ Security permitting, this plan would be implemented collaborating extensively with the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Sudan, US, UK, Norway, other governments, and regional and international organizations.

delegates, and women involved in Comprehensive Peace Agreement implementation participate to discuss the renewed process and lessons learned from previous negotiations.

Through the consultations, participants:

- develop concrete recommendations to feed into the peace talks;
- build trust among women of different backgrounds;
- select women representatives (three from each consultation) to be delegates in the negotiations and other components of the peace process;
- engage other key players; and
- create networks to convey information about the peace process to their communities.

3. Convene Women Representatives for Summit: Late 2007

Convene a summit with the 15 women representatives selected during regional consultations and with women delegates already on negotiating teams to: facilitate collaboration; strengthen negotiation and messaging skills; build a collective platform; and develop an advocacy strategy for increasing women's influence.

4. Ensure the Participation of Women Representatives in Negotiations: Ongoing

AU/UN mediators reserve two rotating speaking positions for women representatives and permit other women representatives to participate as observers. Representatives will brief negotiators and mediators about women's priorities and recommendations, and meet regularly with women delegates on negotiating teams.

5. Engage Darfurians in Outreach and Dialogue: Ongoing

Representatives collaborate with Darfuran organizations to create public discourse. Through public meetings and using radio and newspapers, they widely disseminate information across Darfur and to the diaspora about the negotiations and other aspects of the peace process to create the buy-in and broad based support necessary to sustain an agreement.

6. Involve Representatives in Implementing the Peace Agreement: Ongoing

Following negotiations, representatives help lead implementation of an agreement by aiding:

- the Darfur-Joint Assessment Mission;
- the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation;
- Darfur Transitional Authority;
- possible truth commissions and local reconciliation efforts;
- disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs; and
- efforts to facilitate voluntary return of the displaced.