

Peace Processes and Social Contracts:

How are they linked and where do children, youth and future generations fit in?

Marco Mezzera, Conflict analyst and mediation expert

Abstract

Social contracts are by definition dynamic. As complex framework agreements regulating the interaction between state and society, they respond to the ever-shifting socioeconomic and political variables that characterize the context from which they have emerged. The nuances of a social contract are thus constantly being negotiated – both implicitly and explicitly – but with marginalized groups, including children and youth often having very little negotiation power.

The foundational components of social contracts, however, tend to remain fairly stable, because they are usually controlled by power holders in society. In democratic settings, for instance, structural reforms of the dominant governance system normally can only take place through lengthy and uncertain legislative processes. Social contracts therefore tend to reflect the historical past from which they have emerged and the norms and expectations of dominant groups. The hopes and expectations of children and youth or the needs of future generations thus rarely feature prominently.

An exception to this state of affairs is offered by systemic shocks, such as decolonization processes, anti-apartheid struggles, financial crises, and violent internal conflicts.



What is a social contract?¹

The social contract refers to processes by which everyone in a political community, either explicitly or tacitly, consents to state authority, thereby limiting some of her or his freedoms, in exchange for the state's protection and security, and for the adequate provision of public goods and services. This agreement calls for individuals and societal groups to comply with the state's laws, rules and practices in pursuit of broader common goals, such as security or protection, and basic services. In democratic systems, a social contract is truly complete when the state allows for meaningful participation in its political decision-making processes. The validity and legitimacy of a social contract may be gauged by the extent to which it creates and maintains an equilibrium between society's expectations and obligations and those of state authorities and institutions, all amidst a context of constant flux.

This *Issue Brief* focuses on the last of the shocks listed above and elaborates on how the peace processes that eventually follow the outbreak of a conflict can be regarded as potential inflection points to rewrite at least part of the (pre)existing social contract.

The paper briefly compares the main features and challenges of traditional social contracts with those of peace processes.



Social contracts therefore tend to reflect ... the norms and expectations of dominant groups. The hopes and expectations of children and youth or the needs of future generations thus rarely feature prominently.

The ultimate objective of the analysis is to identify challenges to the inclusion of agendas focused on children, youth and future generations in peace processes, and eventually in the resulting peace agreements, but also to propose ways to address these challenges.

The final 'Recommendations' section presents concluding considerations on a way forward, as well as a number of concrete suggestions for possible next steps.

Introduction

Peace processes emerging from civil wars or internal conflicts can be regarded as unique opportunities to shape a joint vision for the future of a conflict-affected country. They normally arrive at the end of a tumultuous road, characterized by protracted violence; loss of human life, infrastructure and social cohesion; and more generally by a widespread sense that something fundamental needs to change in the overall state-society framework, if a new, more sustainable, equilibrium is to be found. While often not all the parties to a conflict may embrace full heartedly the start of a peace process, their presence at the negotiation table provides the immediate opportunity to exchange violent confrontation for dialogue, as the main means to achieve a certain goal.

Peace processes may reach a comprehensive settlement relatively quickly, or they may take many years.² They may collapse almost instantly, or they may continue without a seeming purpose or tangible results for decades. But what matters is that while they are ongoing, space for dialogue and for the potential (re)negotiation of a (preexisting) social contract remains open.

Until they arrive at a comprehensive peace agreement, peace processes are subjected to intense scrutiny concerning their inclusiveness of actors and issues. Many of these processes are blamed for being too exclusive and focused on matters that are relevant primarily for a restricted group of negotiating parties. However, because an immediate end to the violence and the suffering is often the main objective,

such a 'limited' start can be acceptable, provided that the parties agree to the establishment of accompanying mechanisms addressing precisely these initial shortcomings. Involving as wide as possible a range of relevant interest groups in a peace process is always a recommended way to achieve an agreement that is eventually owned by most of society. Increased inclusion of both actors and issues is also a better guarantee that the social contract that will eventually emerge from the peace process will be accepted and acted upon by a country's population.

Because they emerge from situations of intense stress on a society's cohesiveness, peace processes can be regarded as 'defining moments' in a country's political evolution. Like other events that test the very foundations of society, such as decolonization processes, anti-apartheid struggles, financial crises, and possibly also the current global pandemic,³ a peace process can also be seen as an opportunity to correct systemic flaws built into a given society.

Peace processes consist of different phases. They start with negotiations, often – though not necessarily – accompanied by a ceasefire, and are concluded by an agreement. While it is during the implementation phase of an agreement that its relevance for a given society and its inclusiveness are really tested, it is at its beginning, during negotiations, that the terms of a new social contract can and should be introduced. The inclusion in such negotiations of key issues and of those societal groups representing them, is a necessary element to guarantee that the conflict parties will not simply limit themselves to empty promises but will need to agree to specific agendas and implementation mechanisms. It is thus during the negotiation phase that it becomes crucial that the interests of more vulnerable and marginalized groups are brought to the forefront and are properly dealt with. Recent peace agreements, and especially the Nepal Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in November 2006 and the one concluded in 2016 between the government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), seem to signal a trend for more inclusiveness in this respect. Groups representing the rights of victims, indigenous peoples, and women have shown increasing awareness and capacity to insert themselves into peace negotiations. In general, "peace processes today are thus designed to make them more inclusive"⁴ and inclusion "is being promoted by a range of international actors active in such processes as a way of ending violent conflict."⁵ However, three important groups that so far have been conspicuously missing from explicit mention or focus in peace processes include youth (those aged 15–24), children⁶ (those under the age of 18), and future generations.

Peace agreements as social contracts

Peace agreements following an internal conflict (such as civil war, national uprising, ethnic conflict, etc.) have the potential to provide effective entry points for societal transformation, including the renegotiation of a new social contract to settle the main grievances that triggered the conflict in the first place.



Peace agreements, following an internal conflict, have the potential to provide effective entry points for societal transformation.

Indeed, when peace agreements are the outcome of truly inclusive processes, their affinity to the concept of the social contract is evident, and they can be regarded as precursors to a new social contract. However, there is much variation in the inclusivity, comprehensiveness, and binding level of peace agreements. A final settlement is also preceded by a range of in-between steps that

need to be negotiated and agreed. The whole negotiated path towards a political settlement is a constant quest for common ground among the parties to a conflict, and hopefully beyond them. And in a similar way to the dynamic nature of social contracts, the processes of negotiations underlying peace agreements continue after the signing ceremonies, and remain critical during the implementation phase.

Peace agreements are an opportunity to (re)write the social contract or ground rules for a given country, where a common vision is discussed and agreed upon. This visioning of the future for a country previously engaged in conflict could be an opportunity to ideate a just and equitable society for current and future generations. In reality, peace agreements are often the outcome of power struggles among the main parties to a conflict. Negotiations are usually led by adult representatives of these interest groups, who are mainly concerned with short-term political gains and concessions. Inclusivity gaps tend thus to characterize such political settlements. Elite pacts are prioritized above society-wide social contracts, often with the rationale that adding actors and issues to the negotiations may eventually complicate the achievement of a consensual solution and later on, the implementation and monitoring of the agreed agenda points.⁷ This kind of 'limited' peace agreement is obviously deficient in the way it deals with the needs and ambitions of sectors of society that are not yet part of decision-making processes, such as children and future generations. How to interpret and convey these generations' needs and expectations, in order to guarantee them an equitable future, is a challenge that needs further consideration.

In situations where it is very unlikely that a peace process will become thoroughly inclusive at the negotiation table, it is important that relevant agenda points find their way into the negotiations through alternative mechanisms. In this respect, the above-mentioned November 2016 peace agreement in Colombia is often regarded as an interesting example of inclusion of normally marginalized groups (such as victims and indigenous peoples). Its implementation, however, has proven to be very problematic, due to the fragility of the commitments made during a specific historical period and within a particular political context. In similar situations, where the state emerges as the party holding the greatest control over the implementation mechanisms, as time goes by and political priorities shift, the political will to adhere to such commitments often weakens. The social contract that was embedded in the peace agreement starts falling apart. This is normally a period of heightened tensions within a society, where some if not all the terms of the original contract are questioned. At this point, the power relations among the negotiating parties are significantly transformed, with those controlling state institutions in a position of dominance and thus able to steer the national narrative in their preferred direction. The dynamic evolutions characterizing the post-agreement phase of a peace process reflect a parallel evolution of the wider social contract, with which the peace process is inextricably intertwined.

The potential ephemerality of the commitments embedded in peace agreements is one of the main reasons why non-state armed actors taking part in negotiations increasingly try to embed their agenda points, for which an agreement has been reached, into more permanent institutional mechanisms, instruments and political structures. Constitutional amendments or reforms are often the first area to be targeted during such processes. In fact "participatory constitution-making", along with transitional justice and affirmative action measures, has been identified as a key measure that can be used to promote social cohesion by addressing past patterns of social exclusion.⁸ The constitutional revisions undertaken in Mozambique and Colombia in the 1990s, Kenya in 2010, and Tunisia in 2012–2014 all provided such opportunities.⁹ Constitutions have been identified as a key social contracting mechanism (together with dialogue, national development plans, subnational arrangements) that needs to be strengthened in order to "inclusively and coherently address conflict issues and new forms of responsive governance that support transforming institutions at all levels."¹⁰ The national dialogue that is required in order to implement new or updated constitutions can also act as a driver to promote a greater sense of national belonging and social cohesion.¹¹

Recent research¹² seems to indicate a generic trend of increased comprehensiveness in peace accords. Faced with the growing realization that limited agreements, both in terms of scope and of stakeholders involved, are more vulnerable to relapses into conflict,¹³ the international peacebuilding community has been consistently pushing for more inclusivity and for a general expansion of the agenda around peace negotiations. This trend, however, has not been matched by a proportional growth in the level of specificity of such settlements, especially concerning the highly delicate phase of implementation, where resistance by various stakeholders is often encountered. "Recent agreements tend in fact to include more provisions covering different areas, but have fewer mechanisms to verify the progress of implementation."¹⁴ These developments have been encouraging on the one hand, as they usher in greater levels of detail in peace processes and in the resulting agreements, thereby bringing the latter closer to what is normally expected of wider social contracts. On the other hand, such an enhanced comprehensiveness risks becoming externally driven, originating from the vast consensus that has developed within the international peacebuilding community, and not reflecting thus the real interests and concerns of local actors. Often, because of this lack of local ownership, comprehensive peace agreements fail miserably to implement the agreed agenda points.

The 2006 Nepal peace agreement is often mentioned as an example of political comprehensiveness that, at least on paper, closely resembled an ideal attempt to establish a new social contract. Inclusive politics were pursued in its early stages, although feelings of exclusion among certain groups soon emerged and compromised implementation of the agreement.¹⁵ Similarly, the already mentioned key "social contract-making mechanism"¹⁶ of constitutional reform failed to live up to the initial expectations and promises.

Finally, the 2016 Colombia peace agreement with the FARC represents another example of a 'modern' settlement, where inclusion of multiple issues and stakeholders (besides the two main conflict parties) has been pursued consistently and successfully, at least until the signing of the agreement. The implementation phase, unfortunately, has once more highlighted how complicated it can be to maintain the socially renewing spirit of a peace deal, once the dust of the fighting and of the negotiations has settled, and a 'new' power configuration starts to emerge from within a society.

The above-listed peace agreements, despite the difficulties they encountered in their implementa-

tion, still seem to signal a progressive trend towards more inclusion of both stakeholders and issues. This is promising in terms of the pursuit of a durable peace. Specific concerns regarding children, youth and future generations do not appear, however, to have become a systematic component of peace processes. Finally, the importance of the implementation phase and of its mechanisms should not be overlooked, because this phase appears to be the weak link in the overall transition from violent conflict to a peaceful society, with a reasonably functioning social contract keeping it together.



Specific concerns regarding children, youth and future generations do not appear ... to have become a systematic component of peace processes.

Common challenges to peace agreements and social contracts

There are always challenges in the interpretation of commitments and of specific components of a peace agreement. These include:

- **Getting the balance right between specificity and flexibility.** As with a social contract, if the core elements of a peace agreement are not articulated in a very formal way, for example through specific legislation or constitutional amendments, their implementation risks becoming hostage to subjective and informal considerations. The dilemma in such situations revolves around the parties' need, on the one hand, to be as specific as possible in the formulation of implementation guidelines and instructions, while on the other hand, trying to maintain a certain degree of flexibility during the implementation phase. Peace agreements, like social contracts, are supposed to be in constant flux. They do not stop at the signing of a formal document. When truly comprehensive in their nature, they are characterized by so many variables, assumptions, actors and interest groups, that their implementation necessarily requires a continuous evaluation of the terms of the agreement and often their renegotiation. A too rigid legalistic framework may end up dousing the constructive energy that was released by the parties in their joint efforts to reach a consensus on the future of a country. At the same time, an overly undefined framework for the implementation of a peace agreement may lead to the emergence of substantial disagreements and to a call for renegotiation, if not outright dismissal, of several components of the accord. Similarly, excessive

reliance on the power of informal structures and processes to guide such implementation may also be misleading. They can easily escape from the original spirit and intentions of the accord.

- Fostering legitimacy and inclusion.** Comprehensive social contracts, even more than peace agreements, are dynamic in their nature. While a peace accord could still take place in a societal context characterized by a stifling dictatorial regime,¹⁷ an inclusive social contract is per definition a constantly renegotiated process and therefore needs a political environment that allows for freedom of expression and non-violent dissent. Its core contours, or principles, may need to be unequivocally agreed upon, but movement of ideas and opinions should always be allowed within such a normative framework. As a dynamic bargaining process, its stakeholders need to maintain the capacity to constantly assess both the terms of the deal as these evolve over time, and the activities of the other parties.

Autocratic political regimes, where little if any space is allowed for genuine political participation and critique, may also produce their own kind of social contracts, but these would tend to remain limited in their nature, with no full mutual

interaction taking place between the central state and various societal groups. The German Development Institute (DiE) has been exploring the evolution of social contracts across a range of countries, particularly in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region.¹⁸ When interpreted through its deliverables-centred analytical framework, social contracts in authoritarian contexts can be regarded as based on a purely transactional relation between state and society, with protection and provision of services and infrastructure being guaranteed by the state, in exchange for a society's diligent respect of the rules of the formal game, including the payment of taxes. A key component characterizing the mutual relation between state and society in fully functional social contracts, according to the framework proposed by DiE, would instead be absent in such 'controlled' environments. By not allowing society's genuine political participation in the country's affairs, the state creates an instantaneous legitimacy gap, which in most cases is filled by widespread fear of repression. Such limited social contracts are not very different from those post-conflict transitions where one party has clearly obtained the upper hand in the overall peace process, dictating its own conditions to the other party or parties.

FIGURE ONE: GERMAN INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT'S (DiE) CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON THE DELIVERABLES OF A SOCIAL CONTRACT



Source: Adapted from Loewe, M., Zintl T., & Houdret, A. (2021). The social contract as a tool of analysis: Introduction to the special issue on "Framing the evolution of new social contracts in Middle Eastern and North African countries". World Development 145:1-16. See Fig. 2 on page 7.

- **Giving sufficient attention to the needs and demands of those with limited negotiating power.** Unfortunately, there is plenty of evidence showing that neither in peace agreements, nor in social contracts, sufficient consideration or access are granted to actors that do not immediately hold negotiating power. Among those actors that are generally left out of the bargaining process are children and youth. Despite such processes being geared towards the future and the realization of a joint vision or common platform, children and youth are hardly represented in negotiations. And even in the case that their concerns are represented, they tend to be interpreted and conveyed by actors that may not hold the right motivations to pursue them sincerely.
- **Recognising that there is no fixed end point to a peace process or social contract negotiation.** Peace agreements should not be approached from a linear and static perspective. A peace agreement, in other words, is not the final chapter of a peace process, awaiting to be properly translated into concrete measures and mechanisms in the course of its implementation phase. Rather, peace agreements should be considered as “starting points for another series of negotiations, bargaining and institutions building”.¹⁹ If the process that has led to a peace accord has not been truly inclusive, the fluid and transformative period that follows the agreement can still present a society with the right opportunity to pursue an encompassing social contract. Parties to the conflict, formal (state) institutions, and wider societal groups, should ideally take this opportunity and expand the original negotiation framework utilized during the peace process to address the complex relations between state and society, and between societal groups.

On the centrality of (political) participation

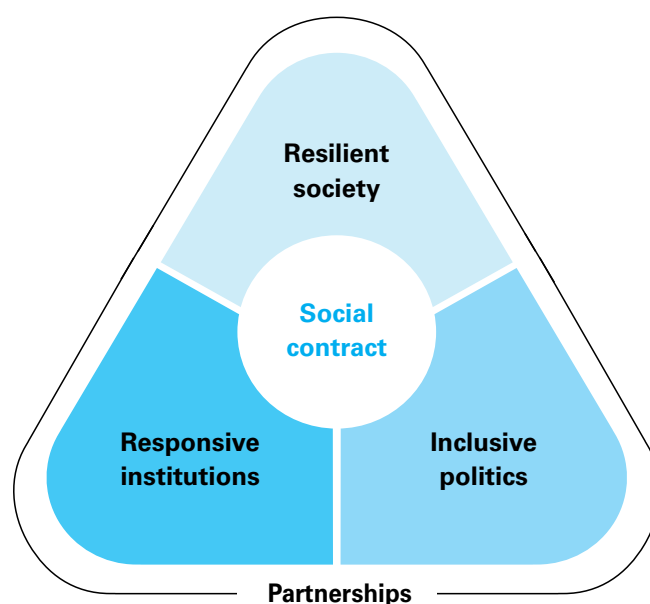
The 2012 Report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict, states that “participation and dialogue enhance social cohesion and national ownership”.²⁰ The capacity of a society to emerge from a protracted situation of conflict, fragility, or political unrest, hinges often on its willingness to create the right space and opportunities for groups that are normally unrepresented and unheard, to engage in a constructive dialogue on how to shape and realize the future vision of that same society. A genuine commitment to the principle of inclusivity should devise ways to foster the real participation of these groups in such a dialogue.

At the heart of recent definitions of the social contract is the notion of inclusion. In its 2012 report, Governance for Peace for instance, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) emphasized the need for the state to foster responsive institutions, proactively improve resilience and avoid exclusive practices.²¹ Ensuring the inclusion of potentially marginalized groups in the provision of services, security (i.e. protection, according to the DiE framework),²² and in basic political participation is seen as key in both the UNDP and DiE frameworks.²³



At the heart of recent definitions of the social contract is the notion of inclusion.

FIGURE TWO: UNDP’S FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION FOR RESTORING SOCIAL CONTRACTS IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED SETTINGS OF A SOCIAL CONTRACT



Source: Adapted from UNDP (2012). Governance for Peace: Securing the Social Contract. New York: UNDP

Similarly, the 2021 report of the UN Secretary-General, “Our Common Agenda”, defines “active and equal participation” as essential to the renewal of “the social contract between governments and their people and within societies”.²⁴ This principle of resisting exclusion is central to a functioning social contract and if properly applied, it should guarantee the inclusion also of children and youth. Current practice, unfortunately, seems to ignore them, mainly because of what

is deemed as their political and social ‘irrelevance’, since children hold limited voting rights and prevailing social norms tend to preclude youth from having a meaningful voice in society.²⁵ The widespread perception, among self-preserving political classes around the world, that there is often no immediate need to prioritize the concerns of the youngest members of society or indeed those yet to be born, represents a recurrent obstacle in efforts to ensure social contracts are inclusive and truly forward-looking.

The analysis of structural inequalities which affect younger and future generations within an existent social contract, can function like a starting point to identify suitable mechanisms to address these inequalities. Young people²⁶ must have a way to denounce discriminatory practices that prevent their full development as citizens, such as limited and inequitable access to services and opportunities, and they should be provided with proper alternative channels to regain such access. The earlier their voices are taken into consideration as part of a national dialogue or social contract process, the more chances there are that they will become an integral part of the related political process.

Political deliberations by institutions in power often have meaningful consequences for younger and future generations. In an open democratic system, the choice of not taking their concerns and views sufficiently into consideration is bound to trigger resistance. This reaction may not be expressed immediately through electoral behaviour. Other forms of civic resistance are available, such as demonstrations, strikes, social media campaigns, among other activities. In more restricted political contexts, or in those where conflict has been a constant presence, ignoring the concerns of these groups may trigger violent reactions and contribute to renewed instability. Each country must envision ways to guarantee that the interests and demands of these younger generations are properly addressed, for example through the creation of specific institutional figures, at both the national and multilateral levels, such as “a Commissioner or Ombudsperson for Future Generations”²⁷ or through the establishment of dialogue platforms at the local and national levels. Organized intermediaries, such as youth organizations, could also help in fulfilling this role.²⁸

How to include children, youth and future generations

In the context of peace processes, where organizational capacity among young people may be low or

compromised by the destructive dynamics of conflict, it is essential that both the negotiating parties and the possible mediators ensure the meaningful participation of young people as representatives in the peace process or at a minimum make the inclusion of their concerns and demands a priority at the negotiation table. Indeed, this is specifically recommended in the 2015 Security Council Resolution 2250.²⁹ Approaches that might help encourage this include:

- **Purposefully including appropriate institutional figures and participatory bodies in the peace process.** In cases where the state is one of the negotiating parties, specific institutional figures and mechanisms that represent young people as well as participatory bodies that include youth could be incorporated into the peace architecture. Examples of such supporting elements around and outside the negotiation room include youth committees, subnational dialogues, but also mass mobilizations calling for inclusive peace agreements.³⁰ The level of youth representation in the negotiating delegations of non-state armed actors, and the capacity of these delegations to include agenda points concerning children and future generations, will depend to a large extent on the overall degree of political organization among those non-state armed actors. The more they have been able to build viable parallel political structures as part of their struggle against the state, the more chances they will have to include young people (and other marginalized members of society) and their specific agendas in their platforms.
- **Including strong independent voices wherever possible.** Even when all parties to a peace process profess a legitimate representation of young people, independent initiatives embracing these sectors of society should be safeguarded. The political and time horizon of negotiating parties tends to be circumscribed by partisan considerations and by the overarching need to obtain immediate gains against their opponents. Broader societal interests, often characterized by longer timelines – even stretching into future generations – need to be separately incorporated into the peace process, often through the active advocacy of mediating parties.

The inclusion of these independent voices in the eventual peace agreement will also serve as an effective check on the possibility that the parties might negotiate away some child rights as concessions to reach a final compromise.

- **Identifying and seeking to address collective long-term concerns in peace agreements.** The careful inclusion of young people's concerns and efforts to take a longer-term perspective in a peace agreement will raise the probability of a more inclusive social contract emerging for the whole society. Actively seeking to identify and address issues of collective concern may provide an incentive for young people to engage in the process. As highlighted in the 2021 report of the UN Secretary-General, "Our Common Agenda", the concept of solidarity is strongly related to that



The careful inclusion of young people's concerns and efforts to take a longer-term perspective in a peace agreement will raise the probability of a more inclusive social contract.

of social justice, and should be placed at the centre of a renewed social contract – and hence also peace agreements. In the "fundamental value"³¹ of solidarity, the Secretary-General sees a powerful glue that can keep communities, countries and even different generations together. It introduces the principle of mutual responsibility among societal groups to equitably share obligations, risks and burdens, but also rights and resources. Solidarity cuts transversally across society

and it prevents the emergence of various subnational social contracts representing only the interests of specific groups within society. Solidarity also builds bridges across time, thereby helping the social contract to deliver on its promises of a more inclusive and equitable future for current and future generations. The principle of solidarity is also an important component in peace processes, as it provides a counterweight to the centrifugal forces unleashed by violent conflict and directs all sectors of society towards the common task of shaping a joint vision for the country.

Recommendations

Enable participation

Consultative and participatory mechanisms are essential in ensuring a durable and peaceful social contract that is inclusive of younger and future generations. Young people should be encouraged and empowered to find their legitimate place within such mechanisms. Following an incremental approach, their participation in the shaping of a country's peace process and resulting social contract should start at the local level, through specific aggregation mechanisms, to further evolve at the national level.

Take a long-term approach

The attention of the international community should extend beyond the negotiations and the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement, to also cover the critical period of implementing a peace accord. It is important to ensure consistent and long-term engagement throughout the peace process. The purposeful inclusion of child and youth-focused issues during the whole trajectory of a peace process, could take the form of: capacity-building for all delegations; the creation of safe spaces for the interaction between these delegations and independent representatives of children and youth concerns; and the appointment of specialists in these issues who can accompany all the parties throughout the duration of the negotiations.

Identify good practices that foster inclusion

Explore and assess concrete examples where governments have actively developed policies that are inclusive of young people, moving beyond executive institutions at the central level. Judicial, legislative, and decentralized administrative components, but also civil society organizations, should be analyzed with regard to their potential contribution to the effective inclusion of children and youth in a country's social contract. This would be of particular importance, for instance, concerning access to education, training and job opportunities, land and credit facilities, but also health and social services. Local-level mechanisms, even of a hybrid nature, should be included in such an assessment. Along the same lines, it would be interesting to analyze the interface between young people and public-sector institutions at subnational and local levels, because that is where central policies eventually need to find their proper application.

Develop analytic tools

Develop appropriate tools to assess how responsive social contracts arising from peace agreements are to different generations. Such tools could help analyze the structure and dynamics of a social contract with respect to children and older generations. Such a political economy-inspired analytical tool could provide an accessible instrument to understand what kind of social contract may be present in different contexts and how they are faring.

Promote better data collection and measurement of deliverables for young people

A number of youth indexes exist that seek to identify, measure and aggregate indicators in key domains such as economic opportunity and employment, education, health and well-being, safety and security, equality and inclusion, political and civic participa-

tion, and peace and security. These include the Global Youth Wellbeing Index,³² released by the International Youth Foundation, the Youth Participation Index,³³ developed by the Youth Banks Hub for the Western Balkans and Turkey Network of youth organizations, and the Commonwealth Secretariat's Global Youth Development Index.³⁴ Such indexes may be helpful in better quantifying aspects of the social contract that are particularly relevant to children and youth.

Unfortunately, as UNICEF's adolescent data portal³⁵ demonstrates, significant gaps remain in many countries for this age group. More concerted efforts are therefore needed to systematically collect and analyse data on young people if such information is to be used to advocate for more inclusive social contracts. Data availability and information on inter-generational equity is even more constrained and needs to be addressed.

Endnotes

- 1 *Engaged Societies, Responsive States: The Social Contract in Situations of Conflict and Fragility*, by the United Nations Development Programme and NOREF. (2016). p. 9, but with some modifications.
- 2 Nevertheless, even a 'relatively quick' peace process will normally take years to reach a final settlement. For instance, the Nepal peace process was concluded in just four years, between 2002 and 2006. On the opposite side we find the Northern Ireland peace process, which lasted 21 years, between 1987 and 2008. There are ongoing peace processes that have lasted even longer. One striking example is provided by the process between the Government of the Philippines and the country's National Democratic Front. Formal negotiations started in 1986 and are continuing today, although they have been subject to prolonged periods of inactivity and complete breakdown. For more information on the subject, see: Fisas, Vicenç (2015). 'The Design and Architecture of Peace Processes: Lessons learned in the wake of crises', NOREF – Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre.
- 3 Which has once more made evident the imposing inequalities that exist both within and among countries in terms of access to basic health care.
- 4 Çuhadar, Esra (2020). 'Understanding Resistance to Inclusive Peace Processes', *Peaceworks*, 159, March 2020. United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC. p. 2.
- 5 Bell, Christine (2019). 'New Inclusion Project: Building inclusive peace settlements 'in Navigating Inclusion in Peace Processes, *Accord 28*, March 2019. p. 11.
- 6 According to research carried out by the project Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, out of "431 relevant documents from the UN Peacekeeping Database from 1999 to 2015 ... only 75 documents included child protection references", [Watchlist Launches Tool to Better Integrate Child Protection into Peace Processes – Watchlist](#).
- 7 To better understand the tensions often existing between the efforts of parties involved in conflict to forge limited political settlements and those of wider society to arrive at more inclusive agreements and thus social contracts, see: Carl, Andy (ed.) 'Inclusion in Peace Processes', *Accord 28*, Conciliation Resources, 2019; Paffenholz, Thania (2015). 'Inclusivity in Peace Processes', United Nations University Centre for Policy Research; Çuhadar, Esra (2020). 'Understanding Resistance to Inclusive Peace Processes', *Peaceworks*, No. 159, March 2020. United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC.
- 8 United Nations Development Programme and NOREF (2016). 'Engaged Societies, Responsive States: The Social Contract in Situations of Conflict and Fragility', Concept Note. April 2016, p. 11. Available at: [NOREF- Engaged Societies, Responsive States: The Social Contract in situations of conflict and fragility](#)
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- 10 McCandless, E. et al. (2018). 'Forging Resilient Social Contracts: A Pathway to Preventing Violent Conflict and Sustaining Peace', UNDP, Oslo, p. 6.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 Çuhadar, Esra (2020). p. 4.
- 13 See, for example, United Nations and World Bank (2018). 'Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict', Washington, DC: World Bank, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337>. Wanis-St. John, Anthony and Kew, Darren, (2008). 'Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Confronting Exclusion', *International Negotiation* 13, no. 1 (2008): 11–36.
- 14 Mezzera, Marco, Pavicic, Michael and Specker, Leontine (2009). 'Governance Components in Peace Agreements: Fundamental Elements of State and Peace Building?', Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, The Hague. May 2009. p. 11.
- 15 McCandless, E., et al. (2018). p. 31.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- 17 For instance, in the case of one party's clear military victory over the other.
- 18 Loewe, M., Zintl, T. and Houdret, A. (2021). The Social Contract as a Tool of Analysis: Introduction to the special issue on "Framing the Evolution of New Social Contracts in Middle Eastern and North African Countries", *World Development* 145:1-16. See figure 2 on page 7.
- 19 Lyons, Terrence (2004). 'Post-Conflict Elections and the Process of Demilitarizing Politics: The Role of Electoral Administration'. *Democratization*, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 57-58.
- 20 United Nations (2012). *Report of the Secretary-General on Peace Building in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict. A/63/881 – S/2009/304*. p. 11.

- 21 UNDP (2012). 'Governance for Peace: Securing the Social Contract', New York: UNDP.
- 22 Loewe, Zintl, and Houdret (2021).
- 23 Also considered as one of the key government deliverables to society in a social contract, according to the DiE's analytical framework.
- 24 United Nations. (2021). *Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary-General*. New York. p. 4.
- 25 For more details on the issue, see: Global Partnership for Youth in the Post-2015 Agenda (2015). 'The Global Youth Call: Prioritizing Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda', <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/political-participation/>.
- 26 Young people is a term used to describe older children and youth – those aged between 10 and 24. It is a useful term when talking about older children and youth – particularly as regards participation in political or peace processes. Younger children are more likely to be represented by proxies (including their parents or youth organizations or other representatives) in such processes.
- 27 United Nations (2021). 'Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary-General', New York, p. 45.
- 28 Weston, Mark (2022). 'Young People and the Social Contract', *Issue Brief*, June 2022, Office of Global Insight and Policy, UNICEF, New York.
- 29 UN Security Council, 7573rd meeting. Resolution 2250 (S/RES/2250), 9 December 2015.
- 30 The pro-peace youth movement that fought back against the initial rejection of the 2016 peace agreement between the Government of Colombia and the FARC is a striking example of such mass mobilizations.
- 31 United Nations (2021). 'Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary-General', New York, p. 14.
- 32 See: <https://www.youthindex.org/full-report>
- 33 See: <https://www.tog.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Youth-Participaion-Index-2019.pdf>
- 34 See: https://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/5023_V3_Book_lores_smaller.pdf
- 35 See: <https://data.unicef.org/adp/>

UNICEF works in the world's toughest places to reach the most disadvantaged children and adolescents and to protect the rights of every child, everywhere. Across 190 countries and territories, we do whatever it takes to help children survive, thrive and fulfill their potential, from early childhood through adolescence. And we never give up.

The Office of Global Insight and Policy serves as UNICEF's internal think-tank, investigating issues with implications for children, equipping the organization to more effectively shape the global discourse, and preparing it for the future by scanning the horizon for frontier issues and ways of working.

This Issue Brief was produced by the Office of Global Insight and Policy (OGIP) under the guidance of Jasmina Byrne, Gary Risser and Tamara Rusinow. The brief was written by Marco Mezzera and updated by him based on comments received during a roundtable discussion that included: Maddalena Bertolotti, Jasmina Byrne, Peter de Clercq, Adam Day, Eleonor Lefvert, Erin McCandless, Youssef Mahmoud, Maha Muna, Tafadzwa Ndofirepi, Marleen Renders, Gary Risser, Tamara Rusinow, Alexandre Schein, Juliette Touma, Anja Azaryeva Valente, Mark Weston and Marie-Joelle Zahar. The brief was copy-edited by Eve Leckey and design and layout was done by Kathleen Edison and Grace Leong.

Office of Global Insight and Policy
United Nations Children's Fund
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY, 10017, USA

© United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), September 2022

This is a working document. It has been prepared to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and to stimulate discussion. The text has not been edited to official publication standards and UNICEF accepts no responsibility for errors. The statements in this publication are the views of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the policies or the views of UNICEF. The designations in this publication do not imply an opinion on legal status of any country or territory, or of its authorities, or the delimitation of frontiers.