

## **CIVILIANS AND CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPORT TO CEASEFIRES**

### **WHY INCLUDE CIVILIANS IN CEASEFIRE IMPLEMENTATION?**

It is increasingly understood that broadening civilian participation in the ceasefire implementation process can bring many benefits, such as:

- Increasing legitimacy and local ownership of the peace transition process.
- Improving the flow of information and access to local expertise
- Empowering citizens to mobilize politically
- Creating a more inclusive peace process

Note that context and willingness of conflict parties to engage with civil society instead of or alongside international actors is critical to the extent of civilian involvement.

### **CIVILIAN ROLE**

Civilians often perform an important advocacy role, undertaking activities that attempt to push the parties to implement and develop the ceasefire. This includes:

- Public lobbying efforts, such as street protests and media and education campaigns, to mobilize the population for the ceasefire implementation processes and urge conflict parties to develop and implement agreements that bring a temporary or permanent end to violence.

- Raising attention and awareness to the security needs of citizens and local groups. Broadening participation in the ceasefire implementation process increases the chances that the interests of local actors are taken into account in the ceasefire process, and any subsequent negotiations on the final peace agreements.
- Opening and sustaining communication channels between conflict parties before or during the ceasefire implementation process to build the parties' confidence in the process.
- Supporting the verification and monitoring mission.

#### **ADVANTAGES OF INCLUDING CIVILIANS IN CEASEFIRE IMPLEMENTATION**

- **First**, the direct involvement of conflict-affected communities often offers a ready supply of willing actors with priceless local expertise. Civilian protection and human rights monitoring mechanisms and processes typically pre-date ceasefire mechanisms and can provide a pool from which to draw seasoned monitors.
- **Second**, civil society monitors can often draw on their networks, prior experience and contextual knowledge to gain access to contested areas and facilitate intra- and inter party communication and help to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the monitoring mission.
- **Third**, in many cases civilians are drawn from, or associated with, trusted neutral civil society organizations. However, there can also be benefits of involving civilian groups aligned with one of the conflict parties as a means of broadening participation. Civilian groups connected to one of the conflict parties tend to be more acceptable to that actor, this makes it more challenging for that conflict party to dismiss monitoring reports produced by their associates. The challenge here is then to also convince the parties to

accept the involvement of a civilian group that they expect to be biased against them.

- **Finally**, involving civilians in the monitoring process can make ceasefires more inclusive and participatory, for example increasing opportunities for women to be involved in the process. It can also help to improve relations between local populations and international missions, increasing information, and help to overcome problems that might arise in the reporting of violations to predominately male missions.

### **CHALLENGES TO INCLUDING CIVILIANS IN CEASEFIRE MONITORING**

- Involving civilians and civil society in the ceasefire process **can be very dangerous** for civilian groups-coming with great personal risk to those involved.
- It can generate concern from the military and some armed groups who are reluctant to legitimize civilian involvement in security matters.
- Civilians and civil society also have less capacity to push the parties towards compliance. If conflict parties lack the political will to implement a ceasefire, civilian monitors often lack concrete ways to follow-up on ceasefire violations in particular, if there is not a clear connection to the ceasefire management body.
- Civilian monitors can also suffer from a lack of diversity, and the low skill and training of monitors, which can act to undermine the monitoring process.
- A prominent role for civilian monitors can also signal a lack of international commitment to the process that can have downstream effects on compliance.