Dialogue after Peace?

A Gender Perspective on Track Two Dialogues in Colombia, Kosovo, and the Philippines

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Executive Summary

Peace agreements mark a turning point, but not an ending. Across Colombia, Kosovo, and the Philippines, women-led civil society groups have long known this. While high-level negotiations produce formal settlements, it is the sustained, informal, and often invisible work of women's organisations that keeps peace alive in communities where violence, insecurity, and unresolved grievances persist long after agreements are signed.

This report presents findings from a two-year collaborative research project examining how women-led Track Two dialogues contribute to sustaining and reimagining peace in post-settlement contexts. It draws on ten Focus Group Discussions and 37 interviews with 107 women participants across three continents. The research was led by swisspeace between 2024–2026 and was conducted in close partnership with civil society and academic partners in each country. The project was funded by the Swiss Network for International Studies (SNIS).

A team of researchers sought to explore this central research question: *How do women-led Track Two dialogues contribute to sustaining and reimagining peace in post-settlement contexts in Colombia, Kosovo, and the Philippines?*

This research reveals that formal peace agreements, while landmark achievements, do not mark the end of conflict. Across Colombia, Kosovo, and the Philippines, violence persists and transforms—into armed disorder, structural marginalisation, and daily insecurity—long after agreements are signed. It is women-led civil society that continues to sustain peace in these spaces, through dialogue work that is largely informal, underresourced, and invisible to mainstream frameworks.

Seven cross-cutting findings emerge. Women-led dialogues are non-linear and relational: they return iteratively to underlying dynamics of violence and distrust rather than moving towards a fixed endpoint. They function not only as processes aimed at outcomes, but as spaces of care—places where safety, empathy, and solidarity are cultivated as ends in themselves. The body and everyday life are central to this work, with artistic and embodied practices providing both healing and political protection. Finally, the research finds that dialogues operate across different temporal orientations, and that both connection to and independence from formal Track One processes can be strategic resources, depending on the legitimacy of the formal process.

Seven recommendations follow. Donors and policymakers must sustain long-term, flexible engagement beyond the post-settlement peak; fund women-led Track Two dialogue as a core—not supplementary—peace investment; move beyond formal representation to meaningful participation; recognise spaces of care as legitimate peace infrastructure; apply a genuine intersectional lens that reaches the most marginalised women; support documentation of women's peace activism; and ensure robust protection for women peacebuilders facing serious security risks.

Introduction

What happens after a peace agreement is signed? The cameras leave, the diplomats move on to the next crisis, and international attention drifts elsewhere. Formal peace-building programmes begin the work of implementation—benchmarks, timelines, and institutional reform. And yet, for the women living in cities like Cúcuta in Colombia, in the divided landscapes of Kosovo, or in the newly Autonomous Bangsamoro Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) of the Philippines, the signing of an agreement is not a moment of arrival. It is the beginning of a long, uncertain, and often dangerous process of making peace real.

Nine years after the 2016 Colombian Peace Accord, only 34% of all its commitments have been honoured—and just 13% of its gender-specific provisions.[1] In Kosovo, agreements hailed as breakthroughs in 2013 and 2015 have produced little tangible change for communities on the ground, while political tensions periodically escalate.[2] In the Philippines' BARMM, the promise of self-governance and inclusion that underpinned the 2014 peace agreement is challenged by ongoing land disputes, governance conflicts, and the marginalisation of communities that became minorities within the minority through the agreement, such as non-Moro Indigenous Peoples.[3]

In each of these contexts, women are doing important, ongoing dialogue and peace work that often remains unseen. They translate technical legal language into community claims for accountability. They create spaces of safety and solidarity amid ongoing violence. They recover histories that have been deliberately erased. They imagine, and enact, a different possible future, even where formal peace processes fail to deliver tangible improvements for people on the ground.

This report presents findings from a collaborative project titled "Dialogue after Peace? A Gender Perspective on Track Two Dialogues in Colombia, Kosovo, and the Philippines." It draws on ten Focus Group Discussions and 37 interviews with 107 women participants, conducted in close collaboration with civil society and academic partners in each country. The report is structured as follows: after presenting the conceptual framework and methodology, it offers in-depth accounts of women-led dialogue in each of the three cases. It then draws together cross-cutting findings before turning to policy recommendations.

1 Barrera, V., Bayona, P., Ortega, H., Arco, I. & Bargués, P. (2025). How women in Colombia sustain a peace the state forgot, https://doi.org/10.24241/NotesInt.2025/325/en

2 Landau, D.M., Andrić Rakić, M., Hoxha, Z., Krasniqi, V. & Radosavljević, J. (2026). Countercurrent Dialogue in a State of Limbo: Women-Led Dialogue in Kosovo, https://www.swisspeace.ch/articles/pb-countercurrent-dialogue-in-a-state-of-limbo

3 Nario-Galace, J., Palmiano Federer, J. & Coronel Ferrer, M. (2026). Dialogue After Peace? Women-led Post-Agreement Dialogue Spaces in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), https://www.swisspeace.ch/articles/pb-dialogue-after-peace-philippines

Conceptual Framework

This project is grounded in three sets of insights from feminist peace research, critical conflict studies, and scholarship on Track Two dialogues.

PEACE AS A NON-LINEAR PROCESS

Mainstream peace and conflict studies has long operated with a linear model: violence escalates into war, parties negotiate, an agreement is reached, post-conflict reconstruction begins, and a country is declared to be at peace. This model treats the peace agreement as a decisive turning point—the moment when war ends and peace begins.

Feminist scholars have powerfully challenged this war vs. peace binary.[4] Violence, which can take different forms, does not end with the signing of an agreement. It transforms—into criminal armed orders, domestic violence, structural inequality, and daily insecurities of communities that official frameworks often fail to see. Building on the concept of a "peace continuum", feminist peace research understands peacebuilding as actively occurring even in contexts where, from the outside, peace appears to have been reached.[5] In this view, peace is not a destination but an ongoing practice—one that requires continuous, iterative effort. This project also draws on the ancient Greek distinction between Chronos—linear, sequential time—and Kairos—the qualitative, experiential time of meaningful moments.[6] Women-led dialogue, as this research shows, operates in Kairos: it moves backwards and forwards in time, recovering the past, tending the present, and imagining the future, without being bound by the linear logic of formal peace timelines.

PEACE AS RELATIONAL AND GENDERED

Feminist International Relations scholars have long centred the lived, everyday, and deeply gendered experiences of war and peace.[7] Security, in this tradition, is not primarily about the security of states; it is about the security of bodies, homes, and communities. This means attending to experiences that state-centric frameworks overlook, including displacement, sexual and gender-based violence, caregiving, community networks of mutual support, and the everyday labour of maintaining social relations in contexts of danger.

A relational understanding of peace also insists on intersectionality: the recognition that gender never operates in isolation from race, ethnicity, class, age, location, religion, and other dimensions of identity. Women are not a homogeneous group, and their experiences of conflict and dialogue vary enormously depending on who they are and where they live. For Afro-descendant women in Colombia's Pacific region, the experience of conflict is inseparable from a history of racial violence and economic marginalisation, while the LGBTIQ+ communities in Cúcuta, in the north-east of the country, struggle for visibility and recognition, and remain one of the groups most

4 Väyrynen, T., Parashar, S., Féron, É., & Confortini, C. C. (Eds.). (2021). *Routledge Handbook of Feminist Peace Research.* Routledge; Dijkema, C., Anctil Avoine, P., & Koopman, S. (2024). Making Space for Peace in Contexts of 'Non-war' Violence: Challenging War-Peace Binaries Through Feminist, Spatio-Temporal, and Decolonial Approaches. *Geopolitics, 29(5),* 1511–1537.

5 Anderson, M. J., Corredor, E. S., & Zulver, J. (2025). Rethinking Failure: Feminist Peacebuilding and the Peace Continuum in Violent and Illiberal "Post-Conflict" Settings. *Global Studies Quarterly, 5(1)*, 1-9.

6 See e.g. Odell, J. (2024). *Saving Time: Discovering a Life Beyond Productivity Culture.* Penguin Random House.

7 Cockburn, C. (2004). The Continuum of Violence. In W. Giles (Ed.), *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones* (pp. 24–44). University of California Press; Elshtain, J. B. (1995). *Women and War* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press; Enloe, C. (2014). *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (2nd ed.). University of California Press.

affected by persistent discrimination and institutional barriers. For non-Moro Indigenous women in the Bangsamoro, the experience of conflict is shaped by a sense of being a minority within a minority. For Serb women in North Kosovo, it is marked by fear of being used as a political pawn. This diversity needs to be taken seriously when studying women-led dialogue initiatives.

DIALOGUE AS SPACE, NOT JUST PROCESS

Existing frameworks for understanding Track Two dialogues tend to classify them by their goals: pure dialogue (relationship-focused), problem-solving dialogue (outcome-focused), or agonistic dialogue (ontological security focused).[8] These are useful categories, but they share an underlying assumption: that dialogue is fundamentally a process oriented towards a specific objective.

What this research found, however, across three very different contexts, was something more expansive: women-led dialogues that function not primarily as goal-oriented processes but as spaces of care, empathy, safety, and solidarity. These spaces are valuable in themselves, regardless of whether they produce a policy change or measurable outcome.

This implies a need to rethink the relationship between Track Two and Track One processes. The standard assumption is that informal dialogues should feed into, or support, formal negotiations. But as this research shows, the relationship is more complex: sometimes connection to Track One is a resource; sometimes disconnection is a form of agency and protection.[9] The appropriate posture depends on the legitimacy and quality of the formal process—and on the degree of trust or distrust that grassroots actors have in it.

8 Fisher, R., Tadevosyan, M., & Cuhadar, E. (2023). *Track 2 Dialogues.* In: The USIP Learning Agenda: An Evidence Review.

9 Palmiano Federer, J., Pickhardt, J., Lustenberger, P., Altpeter, C., & Abatis, K. (2019). *Beyond the Tracks? Reflections on Multitrack Approaches to Peace Processes.* Centre of Humanitarian Dialogue, the Centre for Security Studies ETH Zurich, Folke Bernadotte Academy and swisspeace; Fal-Dutra Santos, A. (2025). Building Trust Through Care: A Feminist Take on Inclusion in Multi-Track Mediation. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding, 19(2)*, 227–248.

Methodology

This research was multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral in nature, and it was implemented as an international partnership between academic and civil society organisations. The research was led by swisspeace, an associated institute of the University of Basel in Switzerland, in collaboration with the following institutions and individuals: the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) in Spain; the Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular / Programa por la Paz (CINEP/PPP) in Colombia; the New Social Initiative, Artpolis, and Prof. Vjollca Krasniqi of the University of Pristina in Kosovo; and Prof. Miriam Coronel-Ferrer and Dr. Jasmin Nario-Galace in the Philippines. This collaborative design reflects a commitment to co-producing knowledge with the communities and practitioners at the heart of the research.

The project aimed to investigate the role of women-led, Track Two dialogues in sustaining and reimagining peace in post-settlement contexts. Focusing on three country cases, we employed an inductive, qualitative methodology. Rather than testing predetermined hypotheses, the research team invited women active in dialogue initiatives to speak openly about their work, experiences, and understandings of peace in interviews and Focus Group Discussions. Inspired by feminist ethnographic methodology, the team committed to attending to "marginality and power differentials"[10] including not only gender, but also race, class, ethnicity, religion, and geography. In total, the team engaged with 107 women participants across three countries (10 Focus Group Discussions and 37 individual interviews). These include 43 participants in the Philippines (Cotabato City and Tawi-Tawi, August 2023), 40 participants in Kosovo (Pristina and North Mitrovica, September 2024), and 24 participants in Colombia (Cúcuta, Cali, and Bogotá, 2024–2025). Research participants represented a wide range of individuals including representatives of feminist organisations, arts-based groups, or Indigenous community associations, among others. Some were themselves dialogue facilitators, while others were participants in different dialogue initiatives, including through religious and interfaith spaces, local governance forums, community-based networks, or youth exchanges.

CASE SELECTION

The three country cases were selected to ensure variation in world region, conflict type, and the nature of the peace settlement, while sharing key features relevant to the research question. Colombia reached a formal peace agreement between the state and the FARC-EP guerrilla in 2016. The Philippines reached the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) in 2014, and the new autonomous governance was set up after the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) was passed in 2019. Kosovo's situation is slightly distinct: the armed conflict formally ended in 1999 through NATO military intervention; Kosovo unilaterally declared independence from Serbia in 2008, but its political status has remained contested, with partial agreements between Kosovo and Serbia in 2013, 2015 and in 2023. The level of implementation of these national-level agreements varies between the three cases. However, in all of them, Track Two dialogues continue after the agreements, with women's groups playing prominent roles. These shared features make the cases both varied and comparable, allowing for lessons that travel across contexts while remaining grounded in the specificities of each.

10 Davis, D.-A., & Craven, C. (2016). *Feminist Ethnography: Thinking Through Methodologies, Challenges, and Possibilities.* Rowman & Littlefield, p.11

Case Study Findings

COLOMBIA: SUSTAINING A PEACE THE STATE HAS FORGOTTEN

The 2016 Colombian Peace Accord ended more than five decades of armed conflict between the Colombian state and the FARC-EP guerrilla—the largest insurgency in Latin America. It committed to a comprehensive transformation of Colombia: agrarian reform, a drug crop substitution strategy, truth and reparations for victims, and a historic set of gender provisions, developed through the active participation of women's and LGBTIQ+ organisations throughout the negotiation process. According to the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 130 of the agreement's 578 stipulations carry a gender perspective.[11]

Almost a decade later, the picture is sobering. The agreement has only partially been implemented, and a new cycle of violence has taken hold: non-state armed groups, far more fragmented and territorially focused than the FARC-EP, compete for control of communities and resources. Moreover, since 2016, more than 1,000 human rights defenders have been murdered. Political violence continues to disproportionately affect women, LGBTIQ+ people, and Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations. In these circumstances, peace is precariously sustained "from below". It is women in communities across rural and urban Colombia, often without institutional support or formal recognition, who are keeping the Agreement alive and addressing its limitations.

This research focused primarily on Cúcuta, in north-eastern Colombia near the Venezuelan border, a city marked by protracted violence, displacement, and the presence of multiple armed actors. In January 2025, conflict between the ELN and FARC dissidents displaced approximately 80,000 people from the nearby Catatumbo region. This episode was brutal but not exceptional. As one participant put it: "How do you repair when there is nothing to repair? ... How do you solve a problem when all the context of death and violence is permanent?"[12]

Interpreting, Contesting, and Expanding the Peace Agreement

Our research indicates that women-led dialogues in Colombia engage with the 2016 Peace Agreement in three distinct ways. First, they translate: organisations like *Humanas* render the agreement's technical provisions into language that communities can use, adapting it to territorial realities and local knowledge, and using the Agreement as a tool for accountability. As one woman leader described it: "These discussions are mainly concerned with the question of how this gets through to the local level [... and becomes] a tool for accountability, as if we were demanding a constitution or an international human rights treaty."[13]

Second, women's groups contest the Agreement: several organisations have challenged the way the gender perspective has been incorporated into the agreement's implementation. The *Alianza 5 Claves* (5 Keys Alliance), a coalition of women's organisations focused on justice for victims of sexual violence, has pushed the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) to open a dedicated area on sexual and reproductive

11 Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies and UN Women (2019): *Gender Equality for Sustainable Peace: Second Report on the Monitoring of the Gender Perspective in the Implementation of the Colombian Peace Accord*, https://kroc.nd.edu/assets/349904/200128_second_gender_report_in_english.pdf, p.18

12 Interview participant, Colombia

13 Interview participant, Colombia

violence, which the agreement did not originally envisage. As violence evolves, so do community concerns, prompting constant interrogation, reassessment, and updating of what the implementation of the agreement may mean for different people.

Third, women's dialogues expand the peace agenda beyond what the agreement contains. In April 2025, a wide-ranging coalition of state agencies, women's organisations, and international partners succeeded in adopting Colombia's first National Action Plan for Women, Peace, and Security. This milestone, taking place 25 years after UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was passed, was the product of years of teamwork and interaction between the formal and informal spheres which finally compelled the state to honour its commitments and expand frameworks for compliance with the Agreement.

Dissent, Corporality, and Everyday Life

Alongside more formally oriented dialogues, women-led groups in Colombia have developed forms of engagement that challenge conventional understandings of what dialogue is. Rather than seeking consensus through linear, structured, and exclusively verbal deliberation, these dialogues are built around three distinctive characteristics: dissent, corporality, and everyday life.

Dissent: Women use dialogue as a political strategy that surfaces and constructively addresses fundamental disagreements about peace and gender inequality, including disagreements within women's movements themselves. As one participant reflected: "For them, dialogues have also become a practice that allows them to struggle within women's organisational processes to get rid of the misogyny inside ourselves (...) because we must constantly take on everything that culture has told us we are."[14]

Corporality: Unlike formal dialogues that are limited to verbal exchange, women-led dialogue in Colombia engages the body and the senses. Since violence has affected women and LGBTIQ+ people in their bodies, dialogue begins from the recognition that "everything goes through the body and the body is also an expression of our inner suffering."[15] Corporality here is both pragmatic and healing: physical and artistic forms of expression are less likely to attract violent attention in high-risk contexts, and they enable a quality of listening and connection that words alone cannot.

Everyday life: Women's dialogues flow through community networks and are embedded in the routines of daily life. They use gender stereotypes strategically: in the Catatumbo region, women conduct dialogue during weaving workshops precisely because it seems to pose no risk: "because what could a bunch of old women sitting around weaving and embroidering really be doing?"[16] This makes them less visible to armed groups and less likely to attract backlash. This everyday embeddedness is not a limitation, but rather a survival strategy in a volatile and violent context.

***Casa Moiras* and Spaces of Care**

The feminist house *Casa Moiras* in Cúcuta exemplifies the kind of space this research found to be central to women-led dialogue. A refuge and support centre for women who have experienced violence and displacement, it is a space (*espacio*) where women can speak, report abuse, receive emotional support, and also knit together. Their slogan is "Resisting from Love and Sorority."

The knitting murals they have created across the city are both an act of dialogue in the

14 Focus Group participant, Colombia

15 Interview, Colombia

16 Focus Group participant, Colombia

way they are co-produced in community, and an act of reclamation of public space, with messages that are both about peace and women's rights: "A female peace is connected with textile art because it's related with the act of repairing (...). Textile art is a tool [for working in these dialogues] because there's also a philosophical position that understands repairing, sewing, and mending as an act of peace."[17]

Alongside knitting, participants describe the value of *comadreo*, Spanish for gossiping, as a way of sharing information, identifying victims of violence and harassers, consolidating care networks, and working together in healing processes. In a society shaped by silence and distrust, this informal knowledge-sharing practice is a form of community intelligence that formal institutions cannot replicate.

The group *Madres del Catatumbo por la Paz* (Catatumbo Mothers for Peace) illustrates a further dimension: women politicising their role as mothers to prevent forced recruitment of young people by armed groups, engaging in direct dialogue with commanders, and recovering over 200 recruited minors through direct action.

KEY INSIGHTS FROM COLOMBIA

— Women-led dialogues interpret, contest, and expand the formal peace agreement in Colombia.

— Dialogue here is less about achieving consensus than about making visible fundamental disagreements, creating space for dissent, and building solidarity across difference.

— The body, the senses, and everyday life are central to these dialogues: physical and artistic forms of expression are both politically protective and healing.

— Women peacebuilders in Colombia face serious threats: more than 1,000 human rights defenders have been killed since 2016, and many women leaders have been forced into exile.

KOSOVO: COUNTERCURRENT DIALOGUE IN A STATE OF LIMBO

Kosovo's path to peace is contested and unfinished. The conflict ended through NATO military intervention, not negotiation. Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence in 2008 remains unrecognised by Serbia and contested internationally. Finally, the EU-facilitated Brussels Agreement of 2013, and a further agreement in 2015, aimed to normalise relations between Kosovo and Serbia, but implementation has been slow and patchy.[18] In 2023, a further "Path to Normalisation" agreement added to the list of commitments that remain largely unfulfilled. Meanwhile, tensions in the Serb-dominated North regularly escalate and the political landscape is marked by increasingly hawkish rhetoric.

The situation in Kosovo today is the legacy of the violent dissolution of the former

17 Focus Group participant, *Casa Moiras*, Colombia

18 Beha, A. (2024). Sequencing a Peace Agreement between Kosovo and Serbia: Ambiguity, Hybridity and Agency. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding, 19(3)*, 412–432.

Yugoslavia, which entailed a decade of state repression by Serbia of the majority Albanian population in its former province, culminating in the 1998–1999 war; followed by international administration, contested independence, and an ongoing political stalemate. Women were almost entirely absent from the formal negotiations at every stage, from the negotiations in 1999 to the final status talks in Vienna in 2006–2007, and even the EU-facilitated Brussels dialogue that has been running on and off since 2011, which included a woman chief negotiator on the Kosovo side, did not incorporate a gender perspective into its substance.[19]

This context of political limbo, structural exclusion, and rising nationalism shapes how women in Kosovo experience and practise dialogue. The research was conducted in September 2024, in the tense months leading up to elections. Across Kosovo, in both Pristina and in North Mitrovica, which otherwise represent vastly differently social and political realities, a profound shared sense of being subject to distant, unaccountable processes was almost universal. As one respondent put it: "Women weren't asked about the war, and now they're not asked about the dialogue either."[20]

A Divided Experience: North and South

There are sharp differences between the experience of women in North Mitrovica and women elsewhere in Kosovo, including Pristina. In the North, where the Serb minority lives under particular political pressure, concerns were dominated by physical safety, survival, and livelihoods. The sense that the formal dialogue process has not only failed to deliver benefits but has actively created new dangers was widespread in the responses: "We live in uncertainty and fear: what will happen tomorrow when they sit down to negotiate again? What consequences will that have for us?"[21]

Women in the North described dialogue initiatives as focused on protection and basic needs, in a context of legal vacuum and perceived physical danger. Meanwhile, what was described as a "golden age" of dialogue in the period 2011–2015, when some agreements were being reached at the Track One level and grassroots initiatives were flourishing, has given way to a period of stalemate and backlash. As one participant noted, the Track One dialogue has become "completely contradictory to the meaning of the word 'dialogue'. It has become utterly unrecognisable."[22]

In Pristina, respondents did not share the acute insecurity felt in the North, but they too described a profound frustration with being at the mercy of remote and unaccountable political processes. Both contexts shared the conviction that women's involvement would make a difference, that women's initiatives at the civil society level are better able to consider everyday needs and build hopeful coalitions, but that women's voices remain unheard in more high-level, political processes, in particular the official EU-facilitated dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade.

Countercurrent Dialogue: Arts, Memory, and Feminist Recovery

In the face of a stalled and delegitimised formal process, women's civil society in Kosovo has developed what might be called *countercurrent* dialogue: initiatives that run against the dominant political current, maintaining spaces of connection, hope, and imagination precisely because they are not bound by the logic of official negotiations.

One significant dimension of this work is the recovery and preservation of women's

19 Research Institute of Development and European Affairs (RIDEA) & Inclusive Peace (2024). "Shaping Peace: Women's Inclusion in the Kosovo-Serbia Peace Process"; Kosovo Women's Network (2022). "1325: Facts & Fables" p.81.

20 Focus Group participant, Pristina

21 Focus Group participant, North Mitrovica

22 Focus Group participant, North Mitrovica

historical peace activism. A vibrant feminist civil society has documented women's roles in the anti-war movements during the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and in the non-violent resistance of the 1990s—a history that has been largely written out of official accounts, which are marked by male-dominated narratives of heroism and national liberation. In intergenerational meetings, younger women, both Albanian and Serb, described how they discovered in this history a source of inspiration. As one young woman reflected: "I only recently learned that feminism protected me even before I was born."[23]

Arts-based initiatives also play a role in this work. For example, theatre performances have introduced stories of wartime sexual violence to audiences in both Kosovo and Serbia, topics that were otherwise taboo in the public sphere. The work is fragile, and nationalist and misogynist reactions have disrupted some performances and deterred participants, but the work goes on.

The Feminist Spring School, an initiative that has brought young women from Kosovo and Serbia together annually since 2014, offers another example. For most of its participants, the school has been the first space in which they encountered activists from the other side, and for many, the first time they crossed the border. This work of building connections across national and ethnic divides, and doing so explicitly around questions of women's rights, such as joint activism against misogynistic online harassment or domestic violence, takes place in a societal context of widespread backlash against both feminism and peace and reconciliation. Across these initiatives, participants described dialogue not as a goal-oriented process but as something generative, creative, and open-ended: "When we talk about dialogue, it's necessary to achieve more healthy relationships, yes, but it is also a tool, it's about creating something new."[24] Others phrased it in these words: "To me, dialogue means listening, understanding, and in the end, empathy and intuition: being able to read between the lines, to grasp how people are feeling in that moment."[25]

Safe Spaces and the Power of Hope

A recurring theme across the Kosovo case is the importance of safe spaces: places where women feel genuinely able to express their vulnerabilities, needs, and fears without intimidation. In a context where even being seen as a peacebuilder can lead to professional isolation and social ostracism, these spaces are not a luxury. They are a precondition for any meaningful dialogue. As one facilitator from an arts-based organisation described: "We always create a safe space (...) where you give power for someone to elaborate their ideas, you listen to the other side, even if you don't agree. When you go out from that safe space, you have the feeling of hope that something might change."[26]

The women we spoke to in Kosovo were explicit that they view their engagement as directly linked to their gender. They contrast what they see as a male political approach—shortsighted, competitive, concerned with power rather than people—with their own emphasis on relationships, healing, and long-term concerns. As one participant put it: "I believe that the peace women bring would be much more lasting than the one achieved by male politics."[27] This is not merely an essentialist claim, but also a reflection of who is currently setting the agenda and the fact that women remain largely excluded from official decision-making spaces.

23 Focus Group participant, Feminist Spring School, Pristina
24 Focus Group participant, Pristina
25 Focus Group participant, Pristina
26 Focus Group participant, Pristina
27 Focus Group participant, Pristina

KEY INSIGHTS FROM KOSOVO

— The disconnect between Track One political processes in Brussels and grassroots dialogue in Kosovo is structural: women-led civil society operates as countercurrent, not as complement, to the formal process.

— Women engaged in grassroots dialogue perceive Track One developments as actively undermining their efforts: rising nationalism and political polarisation make dialogue work harder and more dangerous.

— Women's historical peace activism has been marginalised in official narratives; recovering it is seen as a source of inspiration for younger generations.

— Arts-based dialogue spaces function as hope-making practices in a context of political limbo, sustaining the possibility of change when high-level political spaces are closed.

— The word "dialogue" itself has been tainted by association with what is considered by many a failed political process; women-led initiatives work to reclaim and reimagine what genuine dialogue can mean.

THE PHILIPPINES: REIMAGINING PEACE AS INCLUSIVE AND RELATIONAL

The Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), signed in 2014 after almost two decades of negotiations between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), represented a major milestone. It brought autonomous governance to the BARMM, creating transitional mechanisms and legal frameworks designed to end more than forty years of armed conflict and address the historical marginalisation of the Bangsamoro people.

Women played central roles in building towards this agreement. Organisations like the Center for Peace Education at Miriam College, working as Secretariat for the WE Act 1325 coalition, consulted thousands of women across the region on substantive issues for the final agreement. When the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) was passed in 2019, giving legislative force to the CAB, women's dialogue initiatives were celebrated as a success story of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.

However, post-agreement, communal conflicts over unsettled land claims, political partisanship, and governance disputes persist. Women who worked for decades to build the peace agreement now face the challenge of ensuring that its promises are implemented and extended to those who were left behind. For example, Indigenous Peoples living within the BARMM feel marginalised within the new autonomy arrangement.

What Makes a Dialogue a Dialogue?
There is a long tradition of women- and community-led dialogue in Mindanao. Yet in the post-agreement context, many participants stressed that not all meetings, consultations, or assemblies should automatically be called "dialogues." The question they posed was: When does a gathering truly become a dialogue?

This was not a theoretical inquiry. For women, Indigenous Peoples, and other community actors, the answer was grounded in practice, shaped by lived experiences of negotiating with state and non-state actors, of claiming rights in fragile governance spaces, and of sustaining relationships amid unresolved tensions. Participants across the BARMM were clear: not all meetings, consultations, or assemblies qualify. Dialogue requires safe spaces, both physical and relational, freedom to express vulnerability without intimidation, trustworthy facilitation that accounts for power differentials, inclusive participation across gender, ethnicity, and community, and a quality of mutual recognition that goes beyond information transfer. As one participant put it: "It's a dialogue because people can speak up on their vulnerabilities and needs, so they feel empowered."[28]

Participants also drew a clear distinction between dialogue as procedure and dialogue as space. In the Philippines context—indeed, the same as in Colombia—this is captured by the concept of *espacio*: a place not only to exchange views but to be seen, heard, and acknowledged. As participants noted, maintaining such space depends on continuous dialogue: "Continuous dialogue is the hard tool because peace is an ongoing process."[29]

Peace Is Uneven: The Minority Within a Minority

This research engaged women from three distinct communities in the BARMM: Moro and non-Moro Indigenous Peoples in central Mindanao (Cotabato City); Moro and non-Moro Indigenous communities in Tawi-Tawi; and Christian settlers in the BARMM. This diversity is central to understanding what dialogue means and does, and it revealed how uneven the benefits of the peace agreement have been.

For non-Moro Indigenous Peoples in Cotabato City, the creation of the BARMM through the peace agreement has produced a new challenge: feeling like a minority within a minority. As non-Muslim, non-Moro communities seeking to preserve their ancestral domains, cultural identity, and rights to self-governance, they face marginalisation within an autonomous region primarily shaped by the dominant Moro leadership's political agenda. Indigenous leaders have been targets of violence, and many report that interactions with governance processes and NGOs feel tokenistic rather than genuinely inclusive. As one respondent reflected: "For [Indigenous Peoples], we always feel inferior. We feel like NGOs come to our communities just to tick a box. That's why many of their projects are not sustainable."[30] For these communities, the ability to speak in spaces where their perspectives are genuinely heard, where they can negotiate their position in a post-agreement political order that was not fully designed with them in mind, is existential.

In Tawi-Tawi, the picture is different. The island province, the most remote in the entire Philippine archipelago, is home to ethnolinguistic groups such as the Tausug and the Bajau, many of whom were supporters or ex-fighters of the Moro National Liberation Front, the movement from which the MILF originally splintered. Here, dialogue tends to focus on ensuring the province is not left behind by the promise of peace and progress: securing livelihoods, protecting rights, and navigating the governance structures of the new autonomous region. In the Tausug language, one word for dialogue, *salaysay*, means to clarify matters through mutual understanding. The emphasis here is on sustaining and protecting what has been gained through the peace agreement.

28 Focus Group participant, Philippines

29 Focus Group participant, Philippines

30 Focus Group participant, Philippines

Organic Dialogue and the Forms it Takes
In Cotabato City, community assemblies have become forums for negotiating the creation of local governance structures under the Bangsamoro Transition Authority. The passing of the IP Code (Bangsamoro Indigenous Peoples' Act) in late 2024 was an important milestone. It accommodated significant provisions that reflected key issues raised during consultations and dialogues, but many respondents expressed concern that their perspectives were not adequately captured. The struggle to ensure fair and judicious implementation of the law continues.

In Tawi-Tawi, neighbourhood associations and religious meetings provide the primary forums for dialogue. Joint Iftar meals and discussions of Islamic practice create spaces where women navigate the intersection of faith, culture, and new national laws—including on issues like child marriage, domestic violence, and women's leadership. Women attending these meetings described the post-agreement period as a continuation, not a clean break: "When did this thinking shift? Was it after the peace agreement? It's not black and white. It's not really on the after or before."[31]

KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE PHILIPPINES

— The peace agreement has been uneven in its benefits: those who were already marginalised in the negotiation process, particularly non-Moro Indigenous Peoples, remain at risk of exclusion in the post-agreement space.

— Genuine dialogue requires specific conditions, such as safety, trust, mutual recognition, and inclusive participation, which are often absent in formal consultation processes that claim the name of dialogue.

— Women-led dialogues serve as conflict prevention mechanisms, sustaining relationships and managing tensions before they escalate to violence.

— The diversity of dialogue forms, from formal assemblies to informal conversations to interfaith gatherings, reflects the diversity of communities and their needs within the BARMM.

— Peace in the Philippines is understood as an ongoing, unfinished, and relational process—not a destination but a space where aspirations are continuously renegotiated.

CROSS-CUTTING FINDINGS
Taken together, the three case studies reveal a set of insights that travel across contexts and speak to larger questions about how peace is sustained in post-agreement contexts. Seven cross-cutting themes emerge from the comparative analysis.

1. Post-Agreement Does Not Mean Post-Conflict
Across all three cases, the signing of a formal peace agreement did not bring an end to conflict. Violence has transformed rather than disappeared: into criminal armed orders, into structural and political marginalisation, into ethnic tensions and the daily insecurity of communities that formal peace frameworks cannot reach. In Colombia,

31 Focus Group participant, Philippines

armed groups compete for territorial control in the vacuum left by the FARC-EP. In Kosovo, a state of limbo has been normalised, punctuated by periodic security crises and rising nationalism and polarisation. In the Philippines, land disputes, governance conflicts, and exclusion persist in the post-agreement space. This finding fundamentally challenges the linear model of peace processes. Agreements are not endpoints; they are beginnings that create new political vocabularies, new possibilities, and new contestations.

2. Dialogues Are Non-Linear
Women-led dialogue practices in all three contexts are continuous, adaptive, and cyclical. They do not follow a linear logic from problem to solution. They return again and again to the same underlying dynamics of violence, distrust, and inequality as these evolve. Thus, peace operates in Kairos time—a qualitative, experiential temporality—rather than Chronos, the linear sequencing of formal peace timelines. Dialogues are about the relationship, not the issues, and they are not a single event, but rather something that must be continuously renewed rather than completed.

3. Dialogue Is a Space of Care, Not Just a Process
The research found, consistently across all three contexts, that women-led dialogues function not merely as processes oriented towards specific outcomes but as spaces of care, empathy, safety, and solidarity. The feminist house in Cúcuta, the arts-based initiatives in Pristina, the community meeting in Tawi-Tawi, the Feminist Spring School crossing the Kosovo–Serbia border: these are places where people can speak freely, feel safe, and experience what peace might feel like. As such, these spaces are generative in themselves, regardless of whether they produce a measurable outcome. Recognising this requires expanding both the analytical vocabulary available to researchers and the practical frameworks used by funders and evaluators. Metrics focused on formal outcomes miss the most important things these dialogues do.

4. The Body and Everyday Life Matter
A significant finding—particularly prominent in Colombia but present across all three cases—is the centrality of the body and of everyday life to women-led dialogue. These dialogues reach beyond rational verbal exchange: they engage the senses through music, art, and theatre; they use the body through weaving, knitting, and performance; they flow through everyday routines, using the cover of "women's activities" to create safer spaces for conversation. This is not incidental. It reflects a deeply held recognition that violence affects bodies, and that healing must too. It also reflects a survival strategy: in contexts where being a feminist or a peace activist attracts violent attention, everyday-coded activities provide protection.

5. Temporality: Past, Present, and Future
One of the most striking findings of this research is the way different cases orient themselves differently in time. Traditional peace and conflict studies understand Track Two dialogues as primarily future-oriented, with the goal of reaching, or implementing, Track One agreements. Instead, this research indicates that dialogues can have a more complex relation to temporality, targeting both past, present, and future.

In the Philippines, dialogue is oriented towards the future: implementing the peace agreement, securing rights for communities that were not fully included, and building the governance structures of a new autonomous region. In Colombia, dialogue is embedded in the present: attending continuously to ongoing violence, displacement, and insecurity. In Kosovo, some dialogues centre everyday needs in the context of ongoing limbo and uncertainty, while another dominant temporal orientation is towards the past. Women's civil society is engaged in recovering and preserving a history of

feminist peace activism that has been deliberately marginalised in official narratives. This archival and reparative dimension of dialogue—ensuring that women are not written out of history—is not captured in standard frameworks. It is, as parallel research from other regions has noted, "perceived as a reparative action"[32] in its own right, and one that matters to younger generations seeking sources of inspiration and legitimacy for their own work.

6. Intersectionality: Not All Women Experience Peace the Same Way
This research insists on the diversity of women's experiences within each context. Indigenous women in the Philippines face challenges distinct from those of Moro women or Christian settlers. Women in North Kosovo live in a fundamentally different reality from women in Pristina. Afro-descendant women, displaced women, and LGBTIQ+ people in Colombia each navigate distinct forms of marginalisation. A single category of "women" cannot capture this diversity, and peace frameworks that operate as if it can risk replicating the very exclusions they claim to remedy.

This also applies to the relationship between feminist agendas and peace agendas. Across the three cases, participants raised the question of how these two agendas relate: they often align but do not always. For some, all feminist work is peace work; for others, peace requires a specific political engagement that feminist work may not automatically provide. These tensions are productive, not problems to be solved.

7. Connection and Disconnection from Track One: Both Can Be Resources
One of the more counterintuitive findings concerns the relationship between women-led Track Two dialogues and the formal Track One process. While policy frameworks typically treat disconnection as a problem to be remedied through better "linkage" mechanisms, the research found that in some contexts, operating independently of Track One is itself a form of agency.[33]

The project's collaborative workshop identified three distinct relational modes across the cases: in Kosovo, women-led civil society operates as countercurrent dialogue, running against the dominant political current to maintain spaces of connection and hope. In the Philippines, dialogue tends to "shape the current": engaging with formal processes and governance structures as they emerge, seeking to extend the gains of the peace agreement. In Colombia, dialogue occupies both positions simultaneously: some groups translate and contest the formal agreement; others operate entirely beyond its reach.

Neither posture is inherently superior. When the formal process lacks legitimacy or has been captured by political dynamics that undermine community-level peace, being too dependent on it is a liability. When the formal process represents a promising but unfinished commitment, as in the Philippines, engaging with it is essential. The lesson for policy is not to insist on connection as a prerequisite for support, but to understand what relationship to the formal process makes sense given the context.

32 Aharoni, S. B., Eyal, H., & Preser, R. (2025). "Smaller Goals Were Achieved": Feminist Peace Archives in Israel and Communal Methods of Repair. *Global Studies Quarterly, 5(1)*, p.4

33 Fal-Dutra Santos, A. (2025). Building Trust Through Care: A Feminist Take on Inclusion in Multi-Track Mediation. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding, 19(2)*, 227–248; Martín de Almagro, M., & Bargués, P. (2022). A feminist opening of resilience: Elizabeth Grosz, Liberian Peace Huts and IR critiques. *Journal of International Relations and Development, 25(4)*, 967–992; Blomqvist, L., Olivius, E., & Hedström, J. (2021). Care and silence in women's everyday peacebuilding in Myanmar. *Conflict, Security & Development, 21(3)*, 223–244.

Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations are addressed to international organisations, bilateral donors, national governments, and civil society support actors engaged in post-agreement contexts. They are grounded in the experiences and insights of the women whose work this research sought to understand.

1. SUSTAIN ENGAGEMENT THROUGH AND BEYOND THE POST-SETTLEMENT PHASE

The most urgent practical implication of this research is the need to extend peace support well beyond the signing of an agreement. Current attention and funding cycles peak around formal negotiations and drop sharply once an agreement is reached. But as this research shows, the post-settlement period is where some of the most critical and vulnerable peace work happens.

— Develop long-term, flexible funding instruments for post-settlement contexts, with timeframes that extend well beyond a decade after the signing of an agreement.
— Maintain institutional engagement with women-led civil society through transitions in formal political processes, not only during negotiations.
— Include post-agreement indicators in monitoring frameworks for peace processes, capturing community-level dynamics and not only formal implementation milestones.
— Apply an intersectional lens to ongoing analysis of post-agreement engagement, with a particular view to the unequal distribution of peace dividends across different groups.

2. FUND WOMEN-LED TRACK TWO DIALOGUES AS A CORE PEACE INVESTMENT

Women-led Track Two dialogues are not supplementary to formal peace processes. In many contexts, they are the primary mechanism through which peace is sustained at the community level. Yet they remain chronically underfunded and underrecognised in mainstream peace support frameworks.

— Establish dedicated funding streams for women-led informal and Track Two dialogue initiatives, separate from funding for formal peace agreement implementation.
— Redesign funding criteria to accommodate iterative, relational, and non-linear work: move away from requirements for fixed timelines, predefined outcomes, and quantitative deliverables that these initiatives cannot easily satisfy.
— Recognise women-led civil society organisations as equal partners in peace architecture—not as beneficiaries of support or vehicles for consultation, but as experts and decision-makers in their own right.
— Ensure funding reaches the most marginalised organisations, including those working in remote areas, with minority communities, or on stigmatised issues.

3. GO BEYOND FORMAL REPRESENTATION TO MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

The Women, Peace, and Security agenda has rightly emphasised women's representation in formal peace processes. But formal inclusion is not sufficient. Women are often consulted but not heard; represented but not influential; present but unable to shape the agenda.

— Go beyond counting women and other under-represented groups in formal delegations: assess the quality and depth of their influence over the substance, timing, and design of peace processes.
— Provide sustained support for women's preparedness: training, networking, access to technical expertise, and the resources needed to engage effectively across all levels of peace processes.
— Create structured feedback loops between grassroots women-led dialogue and formal negotiation processes, so that community insights can genuinely shape elite-level decisions.
— Address the structural barriers that keep women out of formal political spaces: unequal access to economic resources, threats and intimidation, social pressure, and the expectation that women will manage both political engagement and domestic responsibility.

4. RECOGNISE DIALOGUE AS A SPACE OF CARE

Current frameworks for designing and evaluating dialogue initiatives are built around process and outcome. They are poorly equipped to capture what this research identifies as an important contribution of women-led dialogues: creating spaces of care, safety, empathy, and solidarity that sustain relationships and communities in contexts of ongoing violence.

— Include qualitative and relational indicators in monitoring and evaluation frameworks: trust, safety, empathy, solidarity, belonging, and the sense that one's voice is genuinely heard.
— Fund physical and social infrastructure—feminist houses, community spaces, arts venues, intergenerational meeting places—as a legitimate form of peace investment, not a secondary or support cost.
— Resist the pressure to instrumentalise women-led dialogue by treating it purely as a tool for formal peace processes. Recognise its intrinsic value as a form of peace practice.
— Allow for and support dialogue processes that centre healing, including artistic and body-based approaches, particularly in contexts where violence has been experienced in and through the body.

5. APPLY AN INTERSECTIONAL LENS TO ALL PEACE SUPPORT

Women are not a homogeneous group. Peace support that treats them as such will systematically marginalise those who are already most excluded: Indigenous women, ethnic minorities, displaced women, LGBTIQ+ people, and women in remote or peripheral areas.

— Conduct gender analysis that is also intersectional: disaggregated by ethnicity, age, location, displacement status, religion, and other relevant dimensions.
— Provide targeted support to the most marginalised groups within women-led civil society, recognising that dominant organisations sometimes replicate the exclusions they are meant to challenge.
— Centre local knowledge and community leadership in programme design, rather than imposing external frameworks that do not reflect the specific needs and priorities of diverse communities.
— In the Philippines context specifically: ensure that non-Moro Indigenous Peoples' rights and perspectives are genuinely integrated into BARMM governance, not reduced to tokenistic consultation.

6. SUPPORT DOCUMENTATION AND PRESERVATION OF WOMEN'S PEACE ACTIVISM

In Kosovo, and in parallel research from other regions, the recovery and preservation of women's historical peace activism has emerged as an important form of peace work in itself. Where official narratives have deliberately erased women's contributions, restoring this history is a form of justice and a source of inspiration for younger generations.

— Support archiving, oral history, and documentation projects that capture the legacies of women's peace activism, particularly where these are at risk of being lost.
— Ensure these projects are led by women's organisations and feminist scholars from within the communities concerned, with external support that respects local ownership.
— Integrate findings from documentation projects into formal peace narratives, educational curricula, and transitional justice mechanisms.

7. PROTECT WOMEN PEACEBUILDERS

Women who engage in dialogue and peace work in contexts of ongoing conflict face serious risks. In Colombia, over 1,000 human rights defenders have been killed since 2016, and many women leaders have been threatened or forced into exile. In Kosovo, women who work across ethnic lines face social ostracism and professional marginalisation. In the Philippines, Indigenous leaders have been targeted by violence, with gendered patterns of risk affecting both men and women in different ways.

— Include security support for women peacebuilders as a standard component of peace process support, with particular attention to the specific risks faced by women and other vulnerable groups.
— Engage diplomatically to create political conditions that protect civic space for women-led civil society.
— Ensure that reporting and accountability mechanisms for threats against peacebuilders are accessible at the community level, and responsive to the differentiated risks faced by women, especially those in marginalised or high-risk contexts.

Conclusion

When a peace agreement is signed, the world tends to celebrate and move on. But the women whose stories fill this report know that celebration is premature. The continued work—making peace a lived reality, sustaining it against the currents of ongoing violence and political failure, extending it to those who were left out—is only beginning.

This research has documented that work across three continents and three very different post-agreement contexts. In each of them, it has found a consistent picture: women-led civil society at the forefront of informal dialogue, sustaining peace not through grand gestures but through the patient, iterative, relational practice of bringing people together, creating spaces of safety and care, and nurturing the fragile possibility of a different future.

The conceptual contributions of this research—understanding dialogues as non-linear practices and as spaces of care; recognising the body and everyday life as dimensions of peacebuilding; taking seriously the temporal orientations of different contexts; and insisting on the double possibility of connection and disconnection from Track One as resources rather than problems—are not merely academic. They have immediate implications for how international actors design, fund, and evaluate their support to peace processes.

If peace is not a destination but a practice, then support for it must be sustained, flexible, and long-term. If dialogue is not only a process but a space, then the quality of relationships and the safety of people within those spaces must be central to how we assess what is working. And if women are not a homogeneous group, then the diversity of their experiences and needs must be reflected in every dimension of peace support.

Above all, this research insists on the centrality of women—in all their diversity—to the project of sustaining peace. Not as recipients of protection or beneficiaries of inclusion, but as the primary agents through which peace is kept alive, practised, and reimagined in the communities most affected by conflict. Recognising this, resourcing it, and learning from it may be the most important unfinished business of the international peace agenda.