

Without active civil society participation (a stake in peace), a peace agreement will not likely be effective on the ground. Lack of participation may also have a negative impact on sustaining peace. *Thus, there is a need to create conditions under which civil society could broadly participate in the peace process (but not necessarily in the peace negotiations).*

A way to connect Track I and Track II may be through devising a Track I ½. In this model a local institution/group has a convening authority to bring people together from different sectors to bring their concerns and interests to the policy making process. The key is to create a "safe forum" for negotiations where consensus could be built from the moderate centre. Isolating extremes could prove very risky as extremists could become angry and even more fundamental without the influence of a "moderating" centre. The safe forum is a mechanism that provides space for negotiations within such a hostile context and protects the negotiators (i.e., members of different sectors and groups, senior decision makers, parties to a conflict, experts, academics, etc.). The role of the safe forum is to project itself outward: to provide information and ideas for public dialogue, to build trust across societal divides, and to forge understanding within/among the diverse segments of the general population. It should bring together all the stake-holders, be locally based and generally respected and moderate. The safe forum may draw on external support and advice. However, a clear distinction should be made and maintained throughout that the local convenor is the principal while the outside contributor is an agent. Finding a local convenor that fits the above mentioned characteristics is often very difficult. Discussions are most effective if they start small around an inconspicuous issue and grow in scale and scope gradually. Anchoring a safe forum within a credible local institution may enhance the sustainability of the dialogue.

Such Track I ½ initiatives are important in that they build relationships and social capital, something "hard" negotiations can not do. There is a great value in seeing and appreciating interdependent interests of opposing parties in any conflict and in identifying critical questions such as, for instance: who are the outside actors? What are the interests of the parties to a conflict? Safe fora also create the opportunity to think creatively (not for public attribution). However, extreme caution should be taken to protect those involved in Track I ½. Careful attention should be paid to questions including: who are the extremists? Is it practically possible to create a safe forum? Where are the interests in perpetuating conflict located? (Examples of Track I ½ initiatives include an Israeli-Palestinian Institute aimed at developing ideas for decision makers part to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka.) It is not clear this approach is possible in a society at war.

It was said that the peace process should not comprise one large unified negotiation stream. Instead, it should reflect the complexity of the situation in Sudan (including the growing complexity of the opposition movement itself). *Incremental treaty building would not only be more manageable, but it would provide a clear tangible evidence to the Sudanese people of the process moving forward.* (The merits of incremental peacebuilding and institutionally anchored safe fora are apparent in South Africa where the gradual creation of quasi-governmental and other institutions aimed at facilitating dialogue enabled a relatively peaceful transition from