

- There are many reasons to care about this imbalance – Achieving gender equality in political participation has both intrinsic and instrumental value. Women in political office prioritize efforts to advance rights, promote equality, and leverage opportunity for women and girls. It's a matter of human rights and it's a matter of good governance. The composition of executives and legislatures also affects the quality of laws and influences the extent of their application. Evidence demonstrates that women leaders are more likely to respond to public needs and tend to cooperate across party lines. Historically, this is not the case for men in power.
- The positive impact of women in politics is undeniable. Kofi Annan noted, “study after study has taught us, there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity or to reduce child and maternal mortality. No other policy is as sure to improve nutrition and promote health, including the prevention of HIV/AIDS. No other policy is as powerful in increasing the chances of education for the next generation.” Further, as Madeleine Albright has stated, the world is wasting a precious resource in the dramatic underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, often resulting in the exclusion of women's talents and skills in political life.
- In the words of the National Democratic Institute's (NDI) Chairman Madeleine Albright, women in power “can be counted on to raise issues that others overlook, to support ideas that others oppose, and to seek an end to abuses that others accept.”
- In 2000 the UN passed Security Council Resolution 1325, calling for the increased participation of women in peace processes. Despite this, women made up “only 2 percent of mediators, 8 percent of negotiators, and 5 percent of witnesses and signatories” worldwide between 1990 and 2017. Evidence suggests that “when women and civil society groups are invited and meaningfully participate in peace negotiations, the resulting agreement is 64% less likely to fail and 35% more likely to last at least fifteen years.” However, we need female leaders at all levels of the peace process, especially as negotiators, peacekeepers, and signatories, not just as part of civil society organizations. When women are present in peace negotiations, they challenge norms and bring forth ideas and policy suggestions that would otherwise be ignored or forgotten. In examining the case studies of Colombia and Yemen, we see not only the historical importance of including women in peace and security negotiations, but also the potential pathways forward.
- **Colombia case study-**
  - In 1998, women were formally brought into peace negotiations between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Three women assisted in the peace process as negotiators and coordinators. Though a marker of progress, three women is not enough to call the process inclusive. When an agreement was reached in 2002, women civil society organizations knew that peace would not last and continued to lobby the government and insist plans be made for future conflict and negotiations. When peace talks reopened in 2012, only one of the twenty negotiators was female. In response, civil society leaders organized the National Summit of Women and Peace, calling for women's involvement in the peace process. And by 2015 “women comprised 20 percent of the government negotiating team and 43 percent of FARC delegates.” Women were included on all levels of the peace process and started the first Gender Subcommission. They also demanded that the FARC introduce “confidence building measures” and an apology process to promote peace. Bringing in female peacekeepers was similarly essential.