

## **Women United International - Director (F)**

### **Background**

You are British national who studied peacebuilding at a university in the UK. You have been working with women in conflict-affected countries for over 10 years. You started your career working with women farmers in rural Tlaxcala as part of a development program run by Oxfam and since then have primarily worked with women's civil society organizations in countries emerging from civil war.

You joined Women United International ("Women United") five years ago as a Senior Conflict Advisor. You worked in Afghanistan and Colombia to help women advocate for greater inclusion in those peace processes. When you heard about the imminent peace talks, you pushed for Women United to start a Danaan program, which was officially launched six months ago.

Women United is a non-profit organization based in Washington DC. Women United works with local women's organizations in countries emerging from civil war. The organization's mission is to increase women's participation and representation in peace processes broadly. In Danaan, Women United is working closely with 4Peace as its main local partner; you have provided 4Peace with funding for its programming. You believe that 4Peace can play a key role in ensuring women's voices and perspectives are included in any peace agreement. As your local partner, 4Peace is driving the advocacy campaign, Women United is simply providing strategic guidance to support 4Peace's efforts.

### **What you hope to accomplish**

You want 4Peace to be at the forefront of the advocacy campaign for women's inclusion. You believe that 4Peace is well positioned to lead this effort. The organization has strong leadership and good connections with many of the local communities in Danaan, as well as access to the Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (AFD). 4Peace also understands the intricacies of the peace process better than most other Danaanian civil society organizations advocating for inclusion. You feel their recommendations and strategies for how to increase inclusion are savvy and relevant, not vague. You are aware that 4Peace is pushing for the inclusion of more women in the talks as well as the creation of a civil society forum. You've conducted some research on the risks and benefits of creating such a forum as well as other options for women's inclusion (see addendum). You may want to share this insight with 4Peace.

In terms of your own positioning, you want Women United to be viewed as a global leader on women's inclusion in peace and security processes. Women United is already well known and you're hoping this work will help bolster your reputation among the international community, especially potential funders.

The best way to have women's voices heard is to make sure that women's groups work together and develop a unified voice that is sophisticated and well informed. You know women are adept at building coalitions, mobilizing diverse groups in society, and working across ethnic, religious, political, and cultural divides created by the conflict. You've also witnessed women bridging the vertical divide between elites and the grassroots, increasing the chances that peace will last by promoting buy-in and generating legitimacy. You believe that 4Peace would be stronger as a whole if they created a coalition of like-minded women's groups in Danaan. You've seen women's groups ignored in peace processes

simply because there were too many of them with too similar demands. The lack of a common platform has too often delegitimized women's inclusion. However, it is not your place to form this coalition; 4Peace must decide to make this a reality. You do not want to be seen as another international group telling the Danaanian women what they need to do.

You are aware that several of the women's advocacy groups in Danaan are focused on issues like ending sexual violence in conflict. Though sexual violence is a wide scale, horrible problem that affects women and girls, there has been an overemphasis of this issue and the result has been a portrayal of women as primarily victims of the conflict. Women have played many roles in Danaan's conflict and you believe that we need to highlight their agency above all. Elevating women as leaders can help to bring about more broad scale change because when women are in decision making roles, they broaden the set of issues being discussed and elevate the voices of marginalized groups. You've heard of several examples from other countries in which women who have gained access to peace talks have ensured issues like sexual violence are addressed in peace agreements.

You have heard that the ROEI Commission on Gender has also been convening consultations among women leaders in civil society. As one of the leading women's organizations in the country, the Executive Director 4Peace was invited to one session, and she reported that the meeting was a good networking opportunity, but very little else came of the meeting. The Commission filled the room with elite women from the government, parliament, and civil society, then prescribed what their priorities should be (primarily formal, direct representation for women in the talks, and tracking and addressing sexual violence in conflict) and took little notice of what Danaanian women really had to say about building peace in Danaan. You may want to meet with the Commission representative to learn more about their activities, but you are here primarily to support 4Peace.

### **Capacity to create change**

Despite your fairly recent arrival, you've developed a positive reputation among women's civil society in Danaan. Many have expressed gratitude for your efforts to create a safe space for women's civil society to voice their concerns about the peace process. You also have the ability to connect with high-level international officials and can use this access to raise up civil society actors like 4Peace.

### **Relationships with other roles**

You have a great relationship with the 4Peace representative. You've also recently met the Danaan Women's Unity League (DWUL) leader in one of your local consultations. You respect her and believe DWUL could be a valuable part of a coalition, should 4Peace choose to establish one. DWUL is a well-respected organization and has historical prominence. You are aware that the ROEI Commission on Gender is also working with women's groups in Danaan, but do not have a personal connection with their representative.

Women United has worked with the US State Department on a number of issues, including the US National Action Plan, and therefore you have connections to the US Special Envoy. You have already set up a meeting with him to introduce the 4Peace representatives. You hope to use this connection with the US Special Envoy to gain access to other members of the Contact Group and the Joint Mediation Team.