

Insider Mediation: A Catalyst of Peace Infrastructures

Sustaining Peace Through Insider
Mediation in the Arab States

Foreword

By the Director of UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States Regional Hub in Amman

Across the Arab States, communities continue to bear the weight of intersecting crises—protracted conflict, displacement, economic hardship, and the growing erosion of both vertical and horizontal trust. In such fragile environments, peace does not begin in formal settings. It begins with those closest to the tensions—those who understand the unspoken dynamics, and who choose to engage rather than withdraw. These are the Insider Mediators: community-rooted individuals who create space for dialogue where none exists, who bridge divides through trust and shared experience, and who weave the fabric of peace from within.

Insider Mediators are not outsiders to the conflicts they help resolve. They are deeply embedded in their communities—respected for their integrity, trusted for their discretion, and valued for their ability to engage across divides. Whether addressing family disputes, de-escalating intercommunal tensions, or bridging generational gaps, they are often the first to respond to emerging conflict and the last to leave once the violence subsides. Yet their contributions are too often overlooked and under-supported.

This publication presents the key findings from the first phase of the UNDP Regional Initiative on “Sustaining Peace Through Insider Mediation in the Arab States”, implemented in Sudan, Lebanon, and Jordan between 2023 and 2024 and funded by the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs. Through a number of case studies, it offers a detailed account of how Insider Mediators are catalyzing peace infrastructures at the local level—advancing the Women, Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security agendas, and contributing meaningfully across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus.

One of the most important lessons from this initiative is the transformative potential of structured, inclusive networks of Insider Mediators. When supported and connected, these networks extend far beyond the reach of individual action. They become safe spaces for peer learning, gender inclusion, and trust-building. They also serve as critical entry points for early warning, social cohesion, and people-centered justice—particularly in areas where state institutions are absent, contested, or under severe strain.

As this publication demonstrates, the value of Insider Mediation reaches well beyond the three pilot countries. It offers a timely and adaptable model for other parts of the Arab States region—especially in contexts where governance and justice systems have been fragmented or eroded.

UNDP remains steadfast in its commitment to nationally and locally led peacebuilding. We understand that sustaining peace requires more than technical solutions—it demands a deep commitment to proximity, process, and sustainability. This publication is both a reflection of what has been achieved and an invitation to expand our collective support for Insider Mediators and the infrastructures for peace they help build.

Looking ahead, Insider Mediation offers a compelling and necessary vision for peace: one that starts within communities—and one that, if supported with care, humility, and ambition, can take root even in the most fragile of contexts.



Mary Kawar
Regional Hub Director
UNDP Amman Regional Hub

Acknowledgement

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Acronyms

A.I.	Artificial Intelligence
EU	European Union
HDP	Humanitarian, Peace and Development (nexus)
I4P	Infrastructure for peace
IDP	Internally displaced person
IM	Insider mediator
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MENA	Middle East & North Africa
MHPSS	MHPSS
oPt	occupied Palestinian territory
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
PWDs	People with disabilities
NGO	Non-governmental organization
RSF	Paramilitary Rapid Support Forces
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNITMAS	UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
VAC	Violence against children
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
YPS	Youth, Peace and Security



Executive summary

While Insider Mediation plays an essential role in conflict prevention as a critical part of the Sustaining Peace Agenda, efforts to support Insider Mediators in the Arab States region have often been supply-driven and fallen short to connect isolated initiatives to broader peacebuilding efforts. Taking stock of the progress made under the UNDP Sustaining Peace Through Insider Mediation in the Arab States (UNDP IM Project), the present publication seeks to better understand how Insider Mediators contribute to broader peacebuilding efforts in a context marked by heightened risks of conflict regionalization and violent extremism.

The research focuses on three selected pilot countries - **Sudan, Lebanon, Jordan**. Two of them shifted from compounded crises to active conflict settings during the UNDP IM Project's implementation period (2022-2024). Using a mix of qualitative methods (literature review, 18 semi-structured interviews, 3 focus group discussions), the research develops **five case studies** that seek to understand the **impact of Insider Mediation and how does it connect to other peacebuilding initiatives within an Infrastructure for Peace (I4P) and Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus framework?**

The five case studies, featured in the second part of the publication, examine the impact of Insider Mediation through different lenses. They explore its role in Women, Peace, and Security ([Case Study 01](#)) and Youth, Peace, and Security ([Case Study 02](#)), as well as its implications for disability inclusion ([Case Study 03](#)). Additionally, they analyze the intersection of Insider Mediation with traditional mediation mechanisms ([Case Study 04](#)) and its role in early warning and crisis response ([Case Study 05](#)).

Across the case studies, the research finds that the highly inclusive nature of Insider Mediation (women, youth, PWDs) is a **catalyst of peace infrastructures**. When organized in networks, Insider Mediation has potential to contribute across the HDP Nexus beyond peace interven-

tions.¹ If properly leveraged and fully matured, Insider Mediation networks can **accelerate HDP Nexus localization** and are key contributors to the Women, Peace, and Security and Youth, Peace, and Security agendas. Finally, Insider Mediation **challenges dominant norms - particularly gender norms**, which contributes to **empowering marginalized groups**, including in customary and informal justice (CIJ) systems as mediation practitioners and justice seekers.

However, Insider Mediation networks need to be incrementally developed at the national level before they can produce tangible results at the regional level. Therefore, Insider Mediation networks need cohesive and robust engagement from the UN agencies and development partners to be able to fully leverage their potential. Meaningful spaces for socialization take time and iterative learning, especially in crisis and conflict settings where movement and communication restrictions are commonplace. Therefore, results highlighted in this publication reflect the early stages of these networks, and many aspects of Insider Mediation require further exploration, including in relation to its interactions with CIJ systems.

Although the networks established under the IM Project have yet to reach full maturity, they have demonstrated significant impact. By catalyzing I4P, accelerating localization within the HDP Nexus, and empowering marginalized groups in CIJ systems, they highlight a **valuable model**, which holds potential for expansion to other countries in the Arab States region. With the war between Israel and Hamas causing the near-collapse of the justice system and governance structures in Gaza, the need for Insider Mediation in the coastal enclave—and more broadly in the occupied Palestinian territory—remains critical. Similarly, in post-Assad Syria, the anticipated return of displaced populations and the uncertainty of a transition to civilian rule underscore the urgent need for Insider Mediation efforts.

¹Peace interventions, particularly 'little p' interventions prioritize capacity development by leveraging institutions and the resources of broader society to support peacebuilding, conflict prevention and management. 'Big P' interventions refer to broad, nationwide measures, including political dialogue, UN peacekeeping efforts, and special political missions.



Introduction

Purpose

Since 2011, conflicts have multiplied across the Arab States region driven by competing regional and international interests. This has led to a series of severe political, economic and displacement crises that are exacerbated by the rapid spread of online disinformation, misinformation, and increasingly polarized narratives. The ongoing war in Gaza and its spillover into Lebanon most recently, characterized by systematic and widespread violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, marks a decades-long absence of meaningful peace processes. It also marks the failure of traditional diplomatic avenues in bringing about sustainable peace, particularly Track One² forums.

This heightened risk of conflict expansion and violent extremism is reverberating across the region. It is cascading down to local communities that are already bearing a disproportionate brunt of massive population displacements, resource scarcity and eroding economies, particularly in the post COVID-19 context. The surge in armed conflicts observed in the past ten years is playing out against a lack of accountability, diminished institutional and democratic resilience and increased militarization. Given that the majority of contemporary conflicts are civil wars,³ these dynamics underscore the urgent need to diversify and complement current peacebuilding approaches.

In line with UNDP's 2023, Regional Framework for Sustaining Peace through Insider Mediation,⁴ the UNDP Sustaining Peace Through Insider Mediation in the Arab States Project (2022-2024 – thereafter referred as the UNDP IM Project) has sought to support more innovative opportunities for well-placed intermediaries – understood as Insider Mediators (IMs) - in three pilot countries: Sudan, Lebanon and Jordan.

Defined as an “individual or group of individuals who derive their legitimacy, credibility and influence from a socio-cultural and/or religious – and indeed, personal – closeness to the parties of the conflict [...]”,⁵ the practice of Insider Mediation is central to fostering social cohesion, preventing and mitigating conflicts and implementing peace measures more likely to succeed on the long run. It aligns strongly with the UN Secretary General New Agenda for Peace by emphasizing prevention and inclusive, whole-of-society, and locally-owned approaches beyond conflict settings.⁶

While IMs play an essential role in conflict prevention⁷ and are a critical part of the Sustaining Peace Agenda “conceptualized as a long-term endeavor”,⁸ their efforts have often been supply-driven and fallen short to connect isolated initiatives to broader and shifting peace efforts. The present publication takes stock of the progress made under the UNDP IM Project to better understand how Insider Mediation contributes to the development of Infrastructures for Peace (I4P) and a whole-of-society approach to peacebuilding that better works towards humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) collective outcomes.

In doing so, it looks specifically at how Insider Mediation contributes to the Women, Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security agendas. The publication also seeks to understand how Insider Mediation can be leveraged to build Insider Mediation capacity for marginalized groups, including in more traditional mediation systems. It also focuses on the role played by Insider Mediation in scaling up early warning and emergency responses in conflict-affected settings.



² Track One diplomacy refers to official governmental diplomacy, during which the process of communications is conducted by official representatives of a state or state-like authority and involves interaction with other state or state-like authorities to reach agreements. Susan Allen Nan, "Track I Diplomacy," *Beyond Intractability*, June 2003.

³ United Nations Secretary-General, *Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace* (United Nations, July 2023).

⁴ United Nations Development Programme, *Sustaining Peace through Insider Mediation: A Regional Framework* (2023).

⁵ United Nations Development Programme, *Engaging with Insider Mediators: Sustaining Peace in an Age of Turbulence (Guidance Note 2.0)* (2020).

⁶ UNSG, *A New Agenda for Peace*

⁷ UNDP, *Engaging with Insider Mediators*

⁸ UNDP, *A Regional Framework*.

Scope and objectives

The current publication aims to understand: **what is the impact of Insider Mediation and how does it connect to other peacebuilding initiatives within an I4P and HDP Nexus framework?**

In doing so, the publication specifically aims to shed light on:



Efforts and transformative impact of Insider Mediation among IMs and in their communities



Learning journey of IMs



Evolution of Insider Mediation in fragile environments



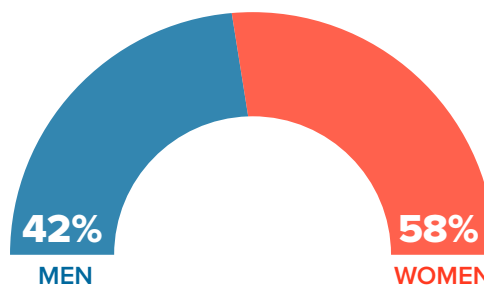
Methodology

Building on the **Conflict-Sensitive Communications and Visibility Strategy**⁹ of the UNDP IM Project, the research was developed using a three-pronged qualitative approach that includes:

- Desk review of relevant literature, media sources, as well as existing studies and reports
- Semi-structured interviews
- Focus group discussions

Semi-structured interviews

18 semi-structured interviews (19 interviewees) complemented by further exchanges on WhatsApp to accommodate specific needs. Three additional interviews were conducted with implementing partners in each priority country (all women).*



Sudan

Insider Mediators



All interviews were conducted in Arabic and online.

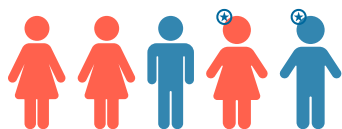
Community Members



The interview was conducted in Arabic and online with complementary exchanges on WhatsApp.

Lebanon

Insider Mediators



Three interviews were conducted in Arabic; two were conducted in French. They were all conducted online.

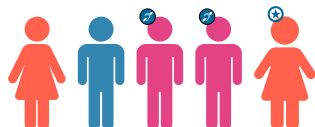
Community Members



Two interviews were conducted in Arabic and one was conducted in French. All interviews were conducted on WhatsApp.

Jordan

Insider Mediators



All interviews were conducted in Arabic. Complementary exchanges took place on WhatsApp to accommodate PWD needs.

Community Members

N/A

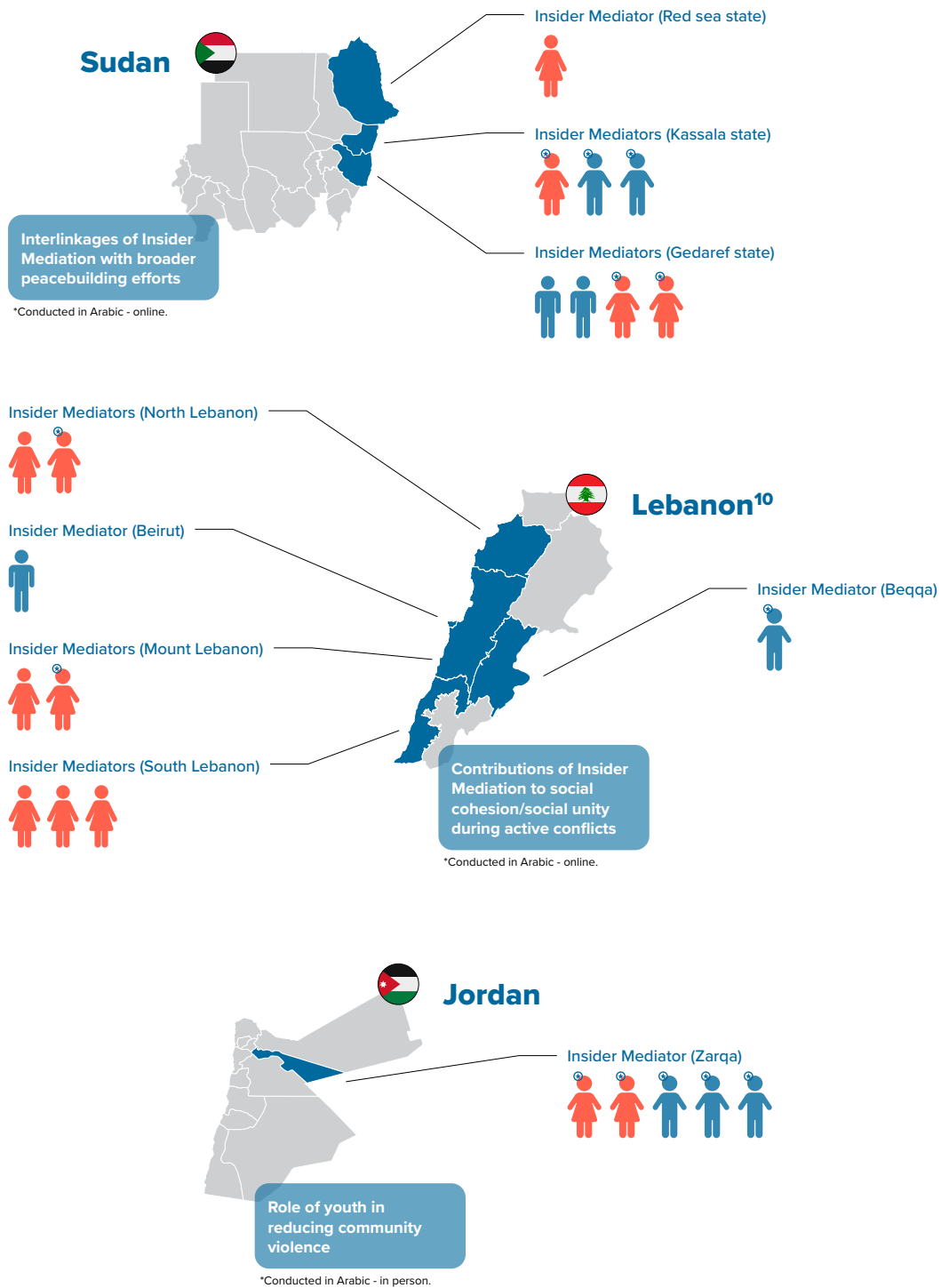
Youth

*Not reflected below

⁹United Nations Development Programme, *Sustaining Peace Through Insider Mediation in the Arab States: Conflict-Sensitive Communications and Visibility Strategy* (2023).

Focus group discussions

Three focus group discussions were conducted (one per priority country). Below is the geographical distribution for each country.



Data collection was conducted in a manner that ensured an informed, accessible, and safe process and used a conflict-sensitive approach.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on the maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations, UNDP or partner countries.

¹⁰ Due to the conflict that took place in September-November 2024 during data collection, additional interviews were conducted to capture the support provided by IMs in Lebanon.

Overview of Insider Mediation Engagement under the UNDP IM Project

The repeated failure of high-level diplomatic efforts in realizing the Sustaining Peace Agenda is highlighting that violent conflicts are “increasingly unsusceptible to one-time international mediation or local conflict resolution”.¹¹ Therefore, as emphasized by the New Peace Agenda,¹² they require nationally-owned, preventative and bottom-up approaches that engage both fragile and prosperous countries, and seek to create positive peace outcomes.

With their inherent capacity to understand local dynamics, IMs are uniquely positioned to identify the entry points necessary to engage with those capable of influencing power dynamics¹³ and offer new peacebuilding perspectives. They provide much-needed flexibility to influence domestic political/ local decision making by fostering everyday social and political relationships that contribute to preventing conflict escalation.¹⁴

In a context of increasingly limited political space, the UNDP’s 2023 Regional Framework for Sustaining Peace through Insider Mediation¹⁵ recognizes the need to scale up conflict prevention and mediation capacities and adopt a society-wide approach to peace that focuses on:

- Inclusivity, especially of women and youth;
- Consistent political engagement;
- Long-term commitment;
- Paradigm shift and multi-sectoriality.

While Insider Mediation is key in this regard, support to the longstanding practice in the Arab States region has often been inadequately tailored and lacking the conflict sensitivity required for effectiveness.¹⁶ To realize its potential, the UNDP’s 2023 Regional Framework for Sustaining Peace through Insider Mediation recognizes the need for systems-based approaches to support action-driven networks, high-value peer learning, diverse support forms, and robust knowledge management.¹⁷

Building on this, the UNDP IM Project (2022-2024) has sought to address some of these shortcomings by supporting:

- creating an enabling environment for IMs to more effectively prevent and resolve conflicts in identified priority countries;
- fostering a shared understanding of Insider Mediation processes geared towards peace and reconciliation and;
- building stronger relationships and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and exchange, both nationally and regionally;
- building insider mediation capacity in conflict prevention and management, particularly for women and youth.

¹¹ Chetan Kumar and Jos De la Haye, "Hybrid Peacemaking: Building National 'Infrastructure for Peace,'" *Global Governance* 18 (2012): 13–20.

¹² UNSG, *A New Agenda for Peace*

¹³ UNDP, *A Regional Framework*.

¹⁴ Hans J. Giessmann, *Embedded Peace: Infrastructures for Peace: Approaches and Lessons Learned* (UNDP Berghof Foundation, 2016).

¹⁵ UNDP, *A Regional Framework*.

¹⁶ UNDP, *A Regional Framework*.

¹⁷ UNDP, *A Regional Framework*.

To realize these objectives, emphasis has been placed on the provision of tailored technical support for IM-designed initiatives, the identification of new opportunities for cross-boundary engagement, and the leveraging of UNDP’s comparative advantage in three identified pilot countries: Sudan, Lebanon and Jordan. The pilot countries reflect the region’s diversity, capturing a range of conflict drivers, outcomes, and crisis phases. During the implementation period, Lebanon and Sudan transitioned from compounded crises to active conflict settings. This prompted considerable programmatic adjustments and a recalibrating of interventions, both geographically and thematically (emergency responses, etc) (see priority contexts).

Priority Contexts

Throughout the implementation period of the UNDP IM Project (2022-2024), the Arab States region continued to experience turmoil. The war in Gaza and its spillover into Lebanon has particularly affected the region as well as the escalation witnessed between the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) with the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) into an all-out war.





The conflict in **Sudan** has unfolded against the background of a failed civilian transition to Omar al-Bashir's authoritarian rule following his removal from power in 2019. Despite the formation of a Sovereign Council to oversee a 39-month transitional period, the negotiation of the Juba Peace Agreement in October 2020 and the establishment of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), efforts came to a halt with SAF's takeover and the subsequent state of emergency declared in October 2021.¹⁸ After failed attempts to reinstate a civilian government and integrate the paramilitary RSF within the SAF under a power-sharing agreement, an open armed conflict broke out between the two parties in April 2023, plunging Sudan into war. The violence quickly spread from the capital city (Khartoum) to the western and southern regions of the country. While Sudan has long been a primary recipient of refugees in Africa,¹⁹ it is now estimated that more than 10.5 million Sudanese have been displaced, most of them (77 per cent) internally towards the eastern and southern parts of the country (with some communities present in the north).²⁰ This represents about 22 per

cent of the total Sudanese population 2023²¹ which have suffered indiscriminate attacks,²² including torture, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), violence against children (VAC), mass arbitrary detention and ethnically motivated violence.²³ While food insecurity has reached alarming levels - with an estimated 97 per cent of internally displaced persons (IDPs) experiencing severe levels of hunger,²⁴ negotiated attempts between the parties to produce tangible peace dividends have failed so far. Prior to the open conflict between the SAF and RSF, increasingly scarce resources, underpinned by climate change, had already coincided with a rise in inter-tribal conflicts, including in the eastern states of Sudan. In 2019, the escalation triggered a state of emergency in Port Sudan and inter-tribal reconciliation measures were taken. However, violence continued to regularly erupt between 2019 and 2022, sometimes requiring military intervention.²⁵ While relatively contained in eastern Sudan, inter-tribal tensions have persisted beneath the surface, heightening the risk of ethnic violence spreading across the region amid a reduced effectiveness and reach of traditional mediation mechanisms.



Similar to Sudan, **Lebanon** has shifted from compounded crisis to an active conflict setting during the implementation period. On 17 and 18 September 2024, hundreds of portable communication devices in Lebanon were remotely detonated by Israel, killing dozens, including children, and wounding thousands.²⁶ After a months-long escalation between Hezbollah and Israel on the country's southernmost border, the conflict spread across Lebanon. Since October 2023, at least 3,100 people (including 192 children) have been killed in Lebanon and 13,819 were

injured. It is estimated that at least 1.3 million people were displaced across Lebanon, and abroad (around 26 per cent of the country's total population) at the peak of crisis.²⁷ This conflict is unfolding against a series of severe crises (refugee, political, financial, environmental) that has rocked Lebanon in the past decade. Prior to the September 2024 escalation, Lebanon was already home to about 1.5 million Syrian refugees who had reached the country since the onset of the conflict in Syria.²⁸ This is in addition to about 490,000 Palestinian refugees, Nakba survivors and their

¹⁸ Gerrit Kurtz, *Power Relations in Sudan After the Fall of Bashir: From Revolution to War* (SWP Research Paper No. 5, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), German Institute for International and Security Affairs, 2024).

¹⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Sudan: Operational Updates*, accessed October 9, 2024, <https://tinyurl.com/sipcu4j>.

²⁰ As of 15 September 2024. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Operational Data Portal: Sudan Situation, 2024*, <https://shorturl.at/UGim4>.

²¹ Estimated at 48,109,006 for 2023. World Bank Group, *Population Total – Sudan, 2023*, <https://shorturl.at/ndRpw>.

²² Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Sudan, Horrific Violations and Abuses as Fighting Spreads – Report*, February 23, 2024.

²³ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Rule of Law and Human Rights, Annual Report 2023, 2023*.

²⁴ Norwegian Refugee Council, *If Bullets Miss, Hunger Won't: Beyond the Numbers: Hunger and Conflict in Sudan, 2024*.

²⁵ International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Displacement Tracking Matrix: Red Sea State Situation Assessment Report*, March 2, 2022.

²⁶ "Israeli PM's Office Confirms Netanyahu Approved Lebanon Pager Attacks," *France 24*, November 11, 2024.

²⁷ Out of a 5.4 million population. This is only an estimate as population censuses are not conducted in Lebanon. Source: World Bank Group.

²⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *UNHCR Lebanon Annual Report 2023* (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023).

descendants.²⁹ Before the escalation, at least 37 per cent of the population in Lebanon was refugee, making it the world's top recipient of refugees per capita.³⁰ Adding stress to already strained and fragile institutions, the country plunged into a severe economic depression that affected all aspects of life and coincided with nation-wide demonstrations calling for broad political reform in 2019.³¹ The deepening economic crisis was further exacerbated by the devastating Beirut port explosion on August 4, 2020. In the meantime, the current political system, rooted in the 1989 Taif Agreement³² and General Amnesty Law,³³ which put an end to a 15-year civil war, has crystallized pre-civil war sectarian structures that have proven particularly resistant to reform. The lack of mean-



In this interconnected landscape and given its strategic position bordering Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), **Jordan**, has felt the ripple effects of regional instability over the decades. Deemed the second-top recipient of refugees in the world,³⁵ the country hosts refugees, primarily from Syria,³⁶ which represents about 6 per cent of the country's total population, already home to large Palestinian³⁷ and Iraqi communities.

While a spillover of existing conflicts has been averted, it remains vulnerable to regional dynamics mainly deteriorating economic conditions, particularly as a result of the COVID-19 crisis that has fueled public debt,³⁸ compounded poverty, and financial insecurity, disproportionately affecting the youth and women.³⁹ This is in addition to considerable climate stresses that significantly constrain prospects for both agricultural and industrial growth with Jordan being among the most water-scarce countries. At the forefront of this crisis, the Zarqa gover-

ingful reconciliation and transitional justice processes after the civil war ended has further entrenched sectarian divisions, which are frequently reignited by and feed into the successive crises. In this context, efforts to establish accountable, representative, and participatory institutions have fallen short, leaving Lebanon enduringly vulnerable to recurring inter-sectarian tensions, stressing 'coexistence' - or *al-A'ish al-Mushtarak* - over meaningful reconciliation as a guiding principle in Lebanese politics.³⁴ Despite the recent political breakthrough that ended a two-year institutional paralysis, entrenched sectarian divisions, weak governance, economic instability, foreign interference, and unresolved collective traumas all constitute heightened factors for civil war relapse.

norate is nonetheless a key industrial hub and plays a vital role in the country's economy, despite high inflation and productive input costs. Zarqa is known for its ethnic and religious diversity and has welcomed communities from across Jordan and beyond (Palestine, Iraq, Syria, South East Asia, etc). However, its high population density has resulted in unplanned housing and overburdened infrastructures, including a public education system that suffers from the country's highest student-to-teacher ratio. A mismatch between demand and supply on the labor market has also led to both high unemployment and underemployment, which coincides with a high crime rate in the region. In parallel, despite the enactment of the Tribal Laws Abolition Law in 1976, tribal practices (e.g., reconciliation agreements, banishment) persist alongside official judicial institutions and hold quasi-official status,⁴⁰ functioning as a primary regulator for conflicts in the region.

²⁹ As of March 2023. United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), *Where We Work* (UNRWA/Lebanon, July 2023), <https://tinyurl.com/rjknnp7b>.

³⁰ As of December 2023. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Lebanon – Needs at a Glance – 2024*.

³¹ Vivian Yee, "Lebanon Protests Unite Sects in Demanding New Government," *The New York Times*, October 23, 2019.

³² Taif Agreement, 1989, United Nations.

³³ General Amnesty Law No. 84/91

³⁴ Hussein Chokr, "Lebanese 'Reconciliation' and the Historical Roots of Deferred Violence," *London School of Economics Blog*, December 20, 2021.

³⁵ International Rescue Committee (IRC), *Refugee Facts, Statistics and FAQs: Everything You Need to Know About Refugees, and the Stories Behind the Statistics* (International Rescue Committee, September 26, 2023), <https://tinyurl.com/39xwm5uz>.

³⁶ As of 30 November 2024. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Operational Data Portal: Jordan* (UNHCR Data, August 31, 2024), <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/jor>.

³⁷ 2,307,011 registered. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), *Where We Work: Jordan*, UNRWA, accessed [06 December 2024], <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan>.

Insider Mediation Networks



Insider Mediation networks have adapted their design to the dynamics of conflict drivers, outcomes, and crisis phases in their respective pilot countries (see below). The selection process of IMs for each network followed similar approaches with an emphasis placed on the identification process of IMs (sometimes using existing I4P, such as local peace committees in Sudan and Lebanon) and needs assessment. The IMs accessed small grants, capacity building and coaching, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for leading the design and implementation of interventions relevant to their communities.

Implementing partners



³⁸ European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *Jordan Country Strategy 2025–2030* (London: EBRD, 2025).

³⁹ World Bank, *The World Bank in Jordan*, February 5, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/jordan/overview>.

⁴⁰ Dan Wilkofsky, "Tribal Justice Persists Alongside Jordan's Law Courts," *New Lines Magazine*, July 4, 2023.

Design



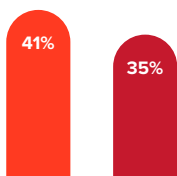
Nationally-designed, regionally implemented, with IMs residing in Red Sea State, Gedaref and Kassala.



The network was originally designed with a national focus. However, due to the active conflict, the project refocused on above mentioned Eastern States where active military confrontation is currently not taking place. Activation has faced delays due to security risks, movement restrictions and limited online communication (with frequent cutoffs by parties to the conflict). Some mediators experienced displacement and were directly affected by the conflict.

17 IMs

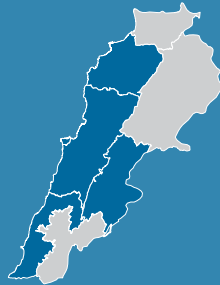
*Up to 35



People with disabilities 0%
Youth balance* 35%
Women's representation 41%

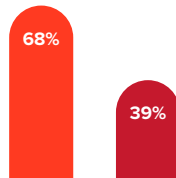


Nationally designed, with IMs originating from South Lebanon, North Lebanon, Mount Lebanon Beqaa and Beirut area.



Despite the escalation of the conflict in September 2024, the network maintained and capitalized upon its national focus during the war.

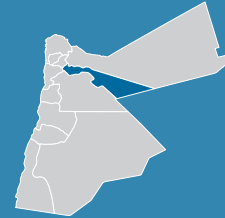
28 IMs



People with disabilities 0%
Youth balance 39%
Women's representation 68%

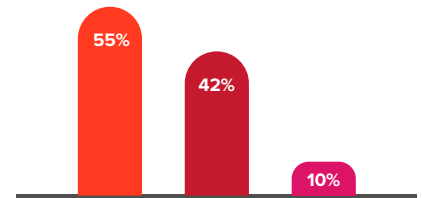


Regionally designed as a pilot, with IMs originating from the Zarqa governorate.



It was designed with a view to potentially expand the regional pilot to other governorates.

20 IMs



People with disabilities 10%
Youth balance 42%
Women's representation 55%



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on the maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations, UNDP or partner countries.

Visibility



In-process



Strong



Strong

Interactions with authorities



Interaction with local authorities remains sensitive due to the ongoing conflict, but some level of interaction with the Native Administration has been witnessed. In Kassala State, the network has had interaction with the Ministry of Culture and Media.



Primarily at the level of municipalities



Strong interactions and endorsement at municipality and governorate level. This has included the provision of a physical space by the municipality for mediation activities. Linkages are also built with the Community Peace Centers and the Ministry of Social Development.

Institutionalization



Low



Medium-low



High

Insider Mediation Regional Network in the Arab States

The three national networks form the foundation of the Arab States [regional Insider Mediation network](#). The UNDP's 2023 Regional Framework for Sustaining Peace through Insider Mediation⁴¹ emphasized the need to strengthen regional mediation efforts, which have often been ad hoc and supply-driven, with limited opportunities for in-person regional learning and exchange due to security and financial constraints.

To complement in-person training and exchanges, the UNDP IM Project launched a regional online platform for IMs from the three pilot countries, in partnership with the United Nations System Staff College. To reduce security risks, the dual-interface platform offers tailored access: a national interface for in-network exchanges and a regional interface open to all mediators. The regional platform aims to centralize learning, communication, and experience sharing and complement offline training with online resources. It provides access to training materials, digital tools, documentation, forums for interaction, and self-paced courses on conflict analysis, sensitivity, community engagement, and mediation. The platform also includes a dedicated section for MHPSS available to all IMs.



⁴¹UNDP, *Sustaining Peace through Insider Mediation*.

Infrastructures for Peace

The prolonged impact of the post-2011 period, compounded by the COVID-19 crisis, have revealed the harmful consequences of years of conflict driven by competing regional and international interests. In some Arab countries, militarization coupled with weak accountability and persistent inequalities have weakened social fabrics.⁴² In the meantime, traditional peacebuilding approaches in the Arab States, ones that assume a clear end to conflict and rely on a stable central government as the primary peacebuilding counterpart have yielded little result.⁴³

In countries that have been affected by civil war, this has heightened the risks of sectarian/ethnic tensions and conflict reignition and highlighted the relevance of local mediation capacities through which drivers of conflict are addressed using mediation, negotiation and/or facilitated dialogue.⁴⁴ Local/Insider Mediation⁴⁵ refers to individuals or groups whose legitimacy, credibility, and influence stem from their socio-cultural, religious, or personal closeness to the conflicting parties. It encourages attitudinal changes among key protagonists which, help prevent conflict and contribute to sustaining peace. Conflict prevention and peace sustainability are at the heart of Insider Mediation's interventions, whose impact is best understood within an I4P framework.⁴⁶

Conceptually, the **I4P framework is valuable for understanding:**

- the impact of Insider Mediation in a closing political space;
- how it connects to broader peacebuilding efforts.

First introduced by Jean Paul Lederach in the 1980s and closely interlinked with the concepts of sustainable peace and structural conflict transformation,⁴⁷ I4P have several definitions. It includes the non-institutional constructive-social relationships that exist within a given political-system.⁴⁸ They are also understood as a network of interdependent systems, resources, values and skills co-owned by government, civil society and community institutions that promote dialogue and consultation, prevent conflict and enable peaceful mediation when violence occurs in a society.⁴⁹ Other definitions view I4P as institutionalized mechanisms for “*cooperative, problem-solving approaches to conflict*,”⁵⁰ ranging from institutions⁵¹ to ‘hard’ infrastructures, analogous to health care, education and finance and characterized by functional integration and organized interplay.⁵² Adopting an I4P lens helps move away from a strictly outcome-based analysis to a more hybrid one that places equal emphasis on consolidated and flexible peace processes, adaptable to evolving needs and challenges, whether in active conflict settings, compounded crises or “*salient democracies*”.⁵³

⁴² Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), *Supporting Local Infrastructures for Peace Post COVID-19: The Role of an Integrated Peacebuilding-Development Approach in the Middle East and North Africa. Expert-Level Dialogue Summary Note*, December 14, 2020.

⁴³ GPPAC, *Supporting Local Infrastructures for Peace Post COVID-19*.

⁴⁴ International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Local Peace Processes Toolkit*, 2022.

⁴⁵ Both terms are used interchangeably, especially in Arabic.

⁴⁶ UNDP, *Engaging with Insider Mediators: Sustaining Peace in an Age of Turbulence* (April 27, 2020). Both terms, peace infrastructures and I4P are used interchangeably in the report.

⁴⁷ Giessmann, *Embedded Peace*.

⁴⁸ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

⁴⁹ This definition is also used by UNDP. Chetan Kumar, "Building National Infrastructures for Peace: UN Assistance for Internally Negotiated Solutions to Violent Conflict," in *Peacemaking: From Practice to Theory*, ed. Susan Allen Nan, Zachariah C. Mampilly, and Andrea Bartoli (New York: Praeger, 2012), 384–399.

⁵⁰ Paul Van Tongeren, "Increasing Interest in Infrastructures for Peace," *Journal of Conflictology* 2, no. 2 (2011): 45–55.

⁵¹ Ulrike Hopp-Nishanka, *Between Negotiation Support, Relationship Building, and Propaganda: The Contribution of the Peace Secretariats in Sri Lanka to Conflict Transformation* (online publication, 2013); and Barbara Unger, Beatrix Austin, Katrin Planta, and Stina Lundstroem, eds., *Peace Infrastructures: Assessing Concept and Practice*, Berghof Handbook Dialogue No. 10 (Berlin: Berghof Foundation, 2013).

⁵² Jeannine Suurmond and Prakash Mani Sharma, "Like Yeast that Leavens the Dough? Community Mediation as Local Infrastructure for Peace in Nepal," *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 7, no. 3 (2012).

⁵³ Giessmann, *Embedded Peace*.

I4P: an Evolving Concept



Non-institutional connective nature of relations within a political system/ constructive social relationships (Scott, 1992)



Institutionalized mechanisms for cooperative, problem-solving approaches to conflict based on dialogue and non violence (Van Tongerom, 2011)



Network of interdependent systems, resources, values and skills co-owned by the government, civil society and community institutions that promote dialogue and consultation, prevent conflict and enable peaceful mediation (Kumar, 2011/UNDP, 2013)



Systemic network designed for simultaneous prevention, curing, heading, and public education - analogous to hard infrastructures (Suurmond and Sharma 2013/ Brand-Jacobsen, 2013)

The above figure summarizes the different definitions of I4P (Giessmann, 2016).

I4P: a Multifaceted Concept

Type	Level	Primary functions
Local peace, councils/committees (I)	Local	Inclusion, local problem solving, legitimizing local governance
Peace secretariat (II)	National	Coordination, facilitate consensus-building, secretarial tasks such as logistical support, communication, liaison, monitoring and implementation of negotiation results (often temporary structures during peace processes).
Government bureaux, departments or peace ministries (III)	National	Coordination

Policy and legislative measures creating I4P (IV)	National	Enabler
National Dialogues/ conferences and multi-party negotiations (V)	National	Preparatory forum for creating a framework for political transition, drafting a new constitution and elections
Non-governmental and civil society platforms for peace and dialogue; interreligious networks, trade-unionist forums, women's movements, councils of the elderly, wise men etc. (VI)	Regional, national, local	Participation and inclusion, advocacy and public pressure
Transitional justice mechanisms such as Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs), vetting councils, lustration mechanisms (VII)	National, local	Support to political transitions, dealing with the past and reconciliation
Insider Mediation (VIII)	National, regional, local	Mediation, capacity building, dialogue facilitation
Early-warning and response (IX)	National, Local	Early-warning and response
Inter-state governmental or non-governmental forums and networks (X)	Continental subcontinental	Coordination, capacity building, advocacy (funds) and advisory functions
UN affiliated peace and mediation support structures (XI)	Global	Technical support, capacity building, facilitation and mediation
IGO/civil society organization (CSO) based support organizations networks (XII)	Global	Technical support, capacity building, advocacy

The above figure illustrates the various types of I4P and was adjusted to reflect some of the research's findings (Giessmann, 2016).

Humanitarian, Peace and Development Nexus

The “Triple Nexus” - Humanitarian, Development, Peace Nexus - adopted during the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) as part of the New Way of Working stresses *“the importance of including peacebuilding in a triangle of humanitarian, development and peace work”*.⁵⁴ A departure from the “Double Nexus”, the New Way of Working also introduces the goal of developing collective outcomes towards the realization of the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It brings to the forefront the question of localization pushing for the prioritization of local perspectives and cooperation with local partners through reinforcing linkages between humanitarian, development and peace activities.⁵⁵ This prioritization translated into a commitment to channel 25 per cent of available funding to local and national actors by 2020, in addition to increasing multi-year and flexible resources (non-earmarked).⁵⁶

The development of collective outcomes and meaningful collaboration between humanitarian, development and peace actors implies differentiating between ‘little peace’ [‘little p’] and ‘big peace’ [‘Big p’] approaches. While ‘Big P’ focuses on high-level political dialogue and peacekeeping, ‘little p’ interventions prioritize trust building and social cohesion by leveraging institutions and the resources of broader society to support peacebuilding, conflict prevention and management.⁵⁷ This entails involving actors that play a role in shaping individual and collective behavior by influencing how conflicts are managed, violence is reduced, trust in authorities across various levels is strengthened, and inter-group relations are improved.

Despite this emphasis on localization, the UN has remained the primary initiator and driving force behind the HDP Nexus approach.⁵⁸ Within this framework, *“peace activities are the least conceptualized”*⁵⁹ partly due to the challenges of reconciling humanitarian principles — humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence—with peacebuilding efforts. In a context where HDP interventions maintain a state and UN centric focus, the transformative potential of bottom-up designed I4P such as Insider Mediation remains underutilized. However, as catalysts for broader I4P efforts, they are a critical asset for advancing collective outcomes and localization across the HDP Nexus.



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⁵⁴ Maraïke Müller-Kone, Eva Meininghaus, Bernd Kemmerling, and Boubacar Haidara, *HDP Nexus Challenges from a Decolonial Perspective* (BICC Discussion Paper, Bonn: Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies, 2024).

⁵⁵ Müller-Kone et al., *HDP Nexus Challenges from a Decolonial Perspective*.

⁵⁶ Eventually, such commitment included international non-governmental organizations, which largely dilutes the 25 per cent commitment to channel funding through organizations headquartered in aid recipient countries. Müller-Kone et al., *HDP Nexus Challenges from a Decolonial Perspective*.

⁵⁷ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Results Group 4 on Humanitarian-Development Collaboration, *Exploring Peace within the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN)*, issue paper, October 2020.

⁵⁸ Müller-Kone et al., *HDP Nexus Challenges from a Decolonial Perspective*.

⁵⁹ Luisa Angelini and Sean Brown, *“Peace” in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus: Good Practices and Recommendations* (European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, 2023).

Insider Mediation in Networks: Key Findings

The research finds that Insider Mediation organized in structured and **inclusive networks** is a **catalyst of peace infrastructures** able to leverage and serving as a multiplier for other types of I4P. The cohesiveness of networks, the tailored use of varied skillsets combined with the empowerment of traditionally overlooked groups are key factors that enhance their contributions across thematic areas and niche fields of mediation and considerably increase outreach capacity, particularly to women, youth and people with disabilities (PWDs). For instance, contributions by IMs are empowering marginalized groups in traditional mediation/CIJ systems, which can result in more people-centred outcomes of justice. These factors not only advance the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agendas but also strengthen networks' capacity to generate more systematic results and bridge gender and intergenerational gaps. While not yet leveraged, Insider Mediation also holds considerable **potential for substantive and localized contributions across the HDP Nexus**, through and beyond 'little p' interventions.

Intersection of Insider Mediation with other I4P under the IM Project

Sudan



Non-governmental and civil society platforms for peace and dialogue (VI);*
Local Peace Committees (I); Peace ambassadors (I) ;
Religious, tribal and traditional leaders (VI); IGO/CSO based support organizations networks (XII) ;
Community-based reconciliation mechanisms (I) ;
Community Management Committee (I).

Lebanon



Local Peace Committees (I) ;
Religious and traditional leaders (e.g., Mukhtars) (VI);⁶⁰
non-governmental and civil society platforms for peace and dialogue (including fact-checking platforms and women-led organizations) (VI);
early warning and response (IX); UN affiliated peace and mediation support structures (XI); IGO/CSO based support organizations networks (XII)

Jordan



Non-governmental and civil society platforms for peace and dialogue (including women-led organizations and PWD organizations) (VI); religious, tribal, and traditional leaders, (e.g., Mukhtars) (VI) ;
Community Peace Centers (I)

*The roman numbers correspond with the types of I4P.

⁶⁰ Mukhtar (مختار) means 'the chosen' in Arabic. It designates a community leader or village headman in parts of the Arab States region, particularly Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and Syria. They are generally elder men and perform a range of missions, such as mediating conflicts, ensuring liaison between the government and local communities and even certifying documentation. The concept is fluid and encompasses different roles from formal state-recognized roles (Lebanon) to more informal roles (Jordan).

Complementary infrastructures⁶¹



Semi-professional mediation



Peace education related curricula; semi-professional mediation



N/A

IM networks as spaces of socialization, require time and meaningful interactions to realize their full potential. It also offers safe spaces for women and youth to interact and engage with one another.⁶² These spaces hold intrinsic (in active conflict settings) and normative value by broadening members' perspectives, incentivizing high-value peer-to-peer learning and supporting the shift to a network-based approach to mediation. However, like the societies they emerge from, they are influenced by broader societal and conflict dynamics, which can hinder this socialization process, and therefore their capacity to mobilize and intervene. For instance, the IM Project's implementation seems to indicate that in its initial stages a network remains inward-focused, and limitations on in-person interactions (e.g., movement restrictions) can significantly hinder the socialization process. However, as socialization strengthens and the networks mature incrementally, their capacity for regional engagement also increases. In this context, regional collaboration (in-person) has the potential to accelerate efforts and create an innovative space of socialization, particularly if efforts focus on key thematic areas such as crisis response and early recovery and extend beyond interactions centered on capacity-building and training.



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⁶¹ Giessmann, *Embedded Peace*.

⁶² During the implementation period, PWD inclusion has been limited to two men with hearing impairment, who have previously known each other. Therefore, interactions within the broader PWD community has been limited as well as the creation of safe spaces.

Case Studies & Success Stories

Insider Mediation: An Inclusivity Enabler and Catalyst of I4P

Diversity in gender, age, ethnicity, religion, and ability within Insider Mediation networks is essential for preventing conflicts, whether localized or rooted in broader conflict dynamics. This diversity drives Insider Mediation's role as a catalyst for other I4P, enhancing protection and empowering marginalized communities to lead peacebuilding efforts. Insider Mediation serves as a bridge to address exclusion and challenge norms that drives conflict and can contribute to escalation. By including communities that are traditionally excluded, Insider Mediation is an effective tool for advancing the WPS and YPS agendas and supporting the rights of PWDs. It is also key for empowering marginalized groups in traditional mediation/CIJ systems for more people-centered outcomes of justice.





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Case Study 01

Advancing the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda Through Insider Mediation

Women's participation contributes to both peace processes and broader political and governance structures. Studies have shown that women's participation in peace processes results in more durable agreements⁶³ and in different priorities brought to the table.⁶⁴ It also ensures that humanitarian needs linked to the root causes of conflict are addressed.⁶⁵ This is at the core of the landmark UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 (2000),⁶⁶ which lays out the four pillars of the WPS Agenda:

- **Prevention** of conflict and all forms of violence against women and girls;
- **Participation** in peace and security decision-making processes at all levels;
- **Protection** from all forms of sexual and gender-based violence and protection/promotion of rights in conflict situations;
- **Relief and recovery** for women and improved capacities to act as agents in relief and recovery.

The closing political space in the Arab States region has been disproportionately affecting women, making them even more unlikely to take part in international or regional negotiations and reducing their space for engagement in such forums. However, despite these limitations, the multiple crises affecting the region have also disrupted and challenges, at least in part, dominant gender norms, making women assume more direct leading mediation roles locally, and better positioned to act as key link with religious, government authorities, or parties to conflicts, particularly in times of crises. They are also critical connectors and space openers able to link up various I4P together or other institutions (justice institutions, municipalities...) and highlight overlooked conflict factors.

⁶³ Jana Krause, Werner Krause, and Pia Bränfors, "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace," *International Interactions* 44, no. 6 (2018): 985–1016; Desirée Nilsson, "Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace," *International Interactions* 38, no. 2 (2012): 243–266

⁶⁴ Louise Olsson and Johan Tejpar, eds., *Operational Effectiveness and UN Resolution 1325: Practices and Lessons from Afghanistan* (Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency, 2009).

⁶⁵ Department of Peace Operations, *Gender Equality and Women, Peace, and Security: Resource Package* (United Nations, 2020).

⁶⁶ United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Resolution 1325 (2000): *Women, Peace, and Security*, adopted October 31, 2000, S/RES/1325.

Women as Mediation Leads and Key Links in Participation and Relief Recovery

In Sudan, Suma⁶⁷ reflects on her first steps as a mediator, prior to joining the IM Sudan network, as part of a women's association she helped establish:

"Initially, joining the association wasn't something I deliberately sought out. Overtime, it became a space where I worked alongside women dedicated to peace. The association has since grown and diversified. We empower women through small projects that don't have access to larger resources and organize joint activities. This was the original goal until I received mediation training. The training was crucial, since I work in areas plagued by significant problems. In 2022, we had major tribal conflicts in these regions"⁶⁸

The violent tribal conflicts⁶⁹ she is referring to have occurred against the background of a decades-long intensifying competition over natural resources,⁷⁰ accelerated by climate change.⁷¹ That year, the conflict reached new levels: *"We faced a tribal conflict that lasted for three days. There was intense fighting from 3 pm onwards each day, with sniper attacks and heavy weaponry. For three days, it was impossible to even step outside to get water or anything essential. We were trapped, unable to leave. Two people died and we had no way to get water or anything. We had no choice but to send out young people to try and bring supplies, but even that was not feasible. We, as women from the association, decided to act."*

Despite the heavy gunfire, Suma mobilized members of the association she helped establish, and they soon reached out for help on behalf of the village: *"We protested telling them that for three days, civilians had been caught in gunfire without protection. We urged them to intervene and ensure safety for those trapped."*

Following their intervention, the authorities de-escalated the situation in line with previous inter-tribal commitments.⁷² Having been able to bring about a halt in the fighting, Suma saw her standing change in the community :

"The experience strengthened my role in the community."

Following this and expanding on the training she received as part of the IM Sudan network, Suma teamed up with other associations to organize visits, raise awareness on conflict escalation and on the protection of women, including among children to *"educate them on how conflicts harm everyone."* She brings with her a wealth of expertise to the IM Sudan network, particularly as someone who practices traditional mediation (see Case Study No. 04). She became not only a mediator but a recognized traditional mediator after successfully intervening to bring an end to the inter-tribal fighting that affected her area. Women formally admitted to traditional mediation in Sudan remains a

⁶⁷ All the names used in the publication are alias names.

⁶⁸ Prior to the start of the IM Project.

⁶⁹ They happened prior to the April 2023 conflict that mainly opposes SAF and the RSF.

⁷⁰ International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Displacement Tracking Matrix: Red Sea State Situation Assessment Report*, March 2, 2022.

⁷¹ Damian Carrington, "How Water Is Helping End 'The First Climate Change War,'" *The Guardian*, December 18, 2019.

⁷² While reconciliation agreements exist between tribes, sporadic conflicts and clashes have occurred between 2019 and April 2023, prompting sometimes the military to intervene.

rare occurrence but her ability to bring an end to conflict opened these doors for her:

“The mediation methods I use have adapted to the community. Now, I have gained acceptance from traditional community leaders, who even include me in administrative decisions.”⁷³

As shown in this example, the disruption of social and gender norms (e.g., inclusion of women in traditional mediation) brought about by conflict and crisis can sometimes lead to increased direct participation in peace and security decision-making processes. Women are invited to play a more effective role in defusing tensions and conflicts, which can in turn be leveraged through IM networks.

Reflecting on her role during the COVID-19 crisis and after the Beirut Port explosion in 2020, Amal from Lebanon, who had set up a majority-female crisis cell in her village, remembers how the endeavor drew harsh criticism, particularly when supporting the enforcement of public health measures: «*Sometimes, they would ask me, ‘How can you, as a woman, tell me I need to quarantine? Do you think you understand better than me?’*»

Recalling her earlier journey into mediation, in which she represented the elders of her village to governmental authorities she says:

“I changed people’s perspectives on women. Women were often seen as a significant cause of conflicts, largely because of perceptions and biases stemming from patriarchal mindsets. Many believed that a woman could not lead a crisis cell, intervene in a crisis, or resolve conflicts. They thought a woman’s place was on the sidelines.”

While the disruption of social norms is made more evident in times of crises, increased participation to peace and security decisions also reflects broader trends in society: “*Mediation in our society is granted only to men, as our society is patriarchal and women are completely excluded. Historically, during the Bedouin era, women could be referred to as ‘Sheikha’* if their father was a sheikh, and they would assume this role due to their father’s presence. However, this representation was very limited. With the advancement of ideas and the growing recognition of the importance of women’s roles, there may now be opportunities for women to participate in mediation.*” – Amira, Jordan. While many women’s efforts are constrained, they remain critical connectors and space openers/holders able to link up various I4P together (faith-based networks, scout networks, traditional male mediators)⁷⁴ or other institutions (justice institutions, municipalities, etc) and act as key prevention, protection and empowerment actors.

*Sheikha can be a woman who holds a leadership position within a tribe or community, including a religious role.

⁷³ Administrative decisions designate the process by which decisions reached through traditional mediation (typically decisions involving most serious cases or inter-tribal fighting) are ratified by state authorities for enforcement.

⁷⁴ See section on the various types of I4P.

Women Mediators as Connectors and Space Openers for Prevention and Protection

Whether directly leading conflict resolution or not, women mediators in Sudan, Lebanon and Jordan are critical connectors and space openers/holders between traditional practices and more innovative mediation practices. This is especially the case in the area of family mediation, particularly in relation to personal status law (PSL) matters (marriage, divorce, child custody, alimony, inheritance), where women tend to be overrepresented. They self assess their presence as less threatening and are able to open and facilitate safe spaces. They are also often working in the care sector (e.g., health care, education, social care), which provides them with critical access to their community. Interventions in this area are particularly critical: many, if not most intra-community conflicts, are linked to PSL cases, yet more traditional male actors are often reluctant to intervene preventively:

“Sometimes people have issues with each other [as couples] that are recurrent, but our leaders, especially men, usually don’t talk about these things” – Amal, Lebanon.

Before they escalate, these cases are often perceived as private matters that do not require outside involvement. Mediation involvement often occurs when a conflict extends beyond the immediate family circle. Hala recalls a case where a man sought to separate from his spouse after discovering a hidden health condition she suffered from:

“And there was a major armed fight [in the village] because both families got involved; there was a fight, there were injuries, including a neighbor, and I took the initiative and went to talk to the man [to de-escalate the situation].”

In her mediation efforts, Hala was joined by the village’s religious leader who, in parallel, reached out to the wife’s family. Soon after, an agreement was reached between both families. They eventually agreed to proceed with divorce proceedings in court. This incident prompted the village’s religious leader to team up with Hala on preventative actions, particularly conflict-resolution sessions for married couples. The sessions were designed as part of the IM Lebanon network initiatives and titled *Tafahom wa Takamol*—Arabic for ‘understanding and complementarity’. They offered a rare space for women and men to openly address issues that are often overlooked or left unspoken. The sessions, co-facilitated by legal professionals (a male family judge and a female lawyer) also helped provide awareness on the nexus between mediation and the judicial resolution of conflicts, including how to access the formal justice system when mediation is no longer possible. Following the session, one of the participants, familiar with the conflict that had occurred just a few weeks prior in the village concluded:

“Maybe if there were available mediation options, they would not have reached this point.”⁷⁵

Training and other capacity building experiences also help reflect on past experiences and design innovative interventions: *“I mean, after all these trainings and experiences, we’ve come to understand how to better analyze conflicts and see things more clearly. If we talk about the iceberg model, there are so many things we see on the surface, but even more that we don’t see beneath it.”* - Amal, Lebanon.

⁷⁵ According to the female mediator who mediated the conflict.

Connecting with key actors, including traditional mediators in one's given area is a central element of conflict prevention and rapid de-escalation. Referring to her interaction with the village representative (Mukhtar),⁷⁶ Amal (Lebanon) says: *"When I spoke with the Mukhtar, he was very happy. It was as if someone had told him, 'You matter; you should know about this.' I told him, 'I'm working on an initiative [as part of the IM Lebanon network],' and he asked me if I needed any help. I said, 'No, I don't need any help, but I wanted to inform you because I am coordinating with the municipality, and I wanted to coordinate with you as the Mukhtar as well.' You know, when you give people this kind of acknowledgment, [...] they feel good about themselves and become more engaged. This greatly reduces the tensions that arise between us."*

Not only do IMs bridge existing gaps by introducing innovative perspectives into traditional mediation approaches, they also act as a catalyst by leveraging existing peace infrastructures (e.g., faith-based networks, traditional mediation VI/XII I4P) and institutions (e.g., family judiciary).

In Sudan, Insider Mediation is also increasing protection for vulnerable groups in active conflict settings, particularly SGBV victims and survivors. IDPs often lack access to tailored support and have few opportunities to report abuse, even more so when access to justice systems is further compromised by conflict. Victims/survivors also often face stigma within their own communities, due to SGBV being often weaponized in conflict as a form of collective punishment. Women mediators in Sudan have been able to access SGBV victims/survivors (primarily women) and create safe spaces for them to open up. They have also been key in facilitating access to services (particularly psychosocial support) and have mediated with families to mitigate the risk of community rejection. This critical role is not limited to active conflict zones:

"Our role is extremely important because, in some cases, women may feel a lack of privacy when it comes to discussing sensitive issues. They might not feel comfortable opening up to a man, but having access to us as women makes it easier for them. That's why it's crucial to have women in the network. I believe our role is both supportive and essential." - Hanan (youth) Jordan

In prevention and protection the presence of women in Insider Mediation networks is essential:

"Our way of thinking differs from men's. This allows us to contribute new ideas or highlight aspects that men might overlook. Even if we're not directly mediating, we work collectively, and our input can guide men on how to approach certain situations." - Hanan (youth), Jordan.

⁷⁶ See footnote ⁶⁰.



Example of completed interventions

	Description	Objectives	Linkages with other types of I4P
PSL and broader family related interventions – Lebanon, Sudan, Jordan	Conflicts sometimes erupt from family related issues, particularly PSL, housing, land and property and inter-family tensions. Women mediators in the three networks provide spontaneous support in such cases.	De-escalate the conflicts and raise awareness/advocate for women’s rights in these areas, with primary stakeholders.	Women’s organizations/ traditional leaders (VI I4P) ; CSO-based organization networks (XII I4P).
Tafahom wa Takamol – Lebanon	Based on needs identified during previous interventions in schools (with children and mothers), a need for mixed-gender sessions on family conflict resolution was identified in close coordination with a religious figure.	Raise awareness on non-violent communication in family context; raise awareness on most common family cases from a judicial perspective.	Faith-based organizations (VI).
Social mediation (sessions for female entrepreneurs) – Lebanon	Tensions that arise among women are often left unaddressed by traditional mediators, which can create future conflicts.	Decrease tensions that may arise from economic competitiveness; create a space for exchange	N/A



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Case Study 02

Advancing the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda through Mediation

Even when strictly defined as people aged under 30, youth represent at least 55 per cent of the population in the Arab States region.⁷⁷ In this context, youth involvement is not only key to meaningful peace processes and broader political and governance structures, it is at the core of people-centered conflict prevention, protection and integration approaches. Their lack of representation in peace processes and government continues to hinder their social integration, and makes them particularly vulnerable to the recurrent crises affecting the region, including violent extremism. In parallel, in the post-2011 context and the rise of social media, youth voices are amplified across the region challenging traditional age-based hierarchies. While essential, the creation of online youth spaces introduces a range of new conflict risks that traditional mediation structures are not designed to capture, prevent and effectively mitigate. This makes the realization of UNSC Resolutions 2250 (2015),⁷⁸ 2419 (2018),⁷⁹ 2535 (2020),⁸⁰ which form the basis of the (YPS) Agenda particularly relevant to mediation, especially within the Arab Strategy for Youth, Peace and Security (2023-2028)⁸¹:

- **Participation:** Ensuring youth engagement in peace and security decision-making processes at all levels.
- **Prevention:** Addressing the root causes of conflict and preventing violence, including youth involvement in fostering social cohesion.
- **Protection:** Safeguarding young people from all forms of violence, including in conflict and post-conflict settings.
- **Partnerships:** Building and strengthening partnerships with youth as critical stakeholders in peacebuilding efforts.
- **Disengagement and Reintegration:** Supporting the recovery and reintegration of youth affected by conflict to enable them to act as agents of positive change.

⁷⁷ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Youth at the Centre of Government Action: A Review of the Middle East and North Africa* (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2022). In this publication, youth is considered people aged 35 or under.

⁷⁸ United Nations Security Council (UNSC), *Resolution 2250 (2015): Youth, Peace, and Security*, adopted December 9, 2015, S/RES/2250.

⁷⁹ United Nations Security Council (UNSC), *Resolution 2419 (2018): Youth, Peace, and Security*, adopted June 6, 2018, S/RES/2419.

⁸⁰ United Nations Security Council (UNSC), *Resolution 2535 (2020): Youth, Peace, and Security*, adopted July 14, 2020, S/RES/2535

⁸¹ League of Arab States, *Arab Strategy for Youth, Peace, and Security (2023–2028)*, 2023.

Youth Mediation as Generational Bridge and Key Prevention/Protection Partner

Traditional/tribal practices are often defined by hierarchy and top-down approaches and access to mediation positions is generally determined by factors such as social status and age. Although traditional mediators continue to hold prestige and maintain legitimacy within their communities, their reach has diminished due to shifting social dynamics, especially with the increased use of social media:

“In Jordan, traditionally, mediators were elders or community leaders like tribal chiefs. They were the ones who resolved conflicts. But if we consider today’s world with its technological advances, particularly social media, they are not keeping up with these changes.” - Ahmad (youth), Jordan

As social media offers new digital spaces for the youth, they also tend to invisibly fuel local conflicts. These factors create a conducive environment for conflicts to escalate, often leaving traditional mediators to intervene too late or unable to prevent the reoccurrence of disputes between parties:

“There’s a high likelihood that by the time the issue reaches the tribal elder, the problem has already become significant. What we do is prevent it from even getting there by addressing it while it’s still a small issue.” - Ahmad (youth), Jordan

In the absence of prevention mechanisms, minor incidents, are often left unaddressed as it is *“unlikely someone would approach a tribal elder to say, ‘He insulted me.’”* Khaled (youth), Jordan. Recalling one such dramatic incident, one male youth mediator recounts that *“a small issue became a significant issue [involving bloodshed] that even tribal elders could not resolve. I believe if we had intervened earlier, we could have solved it when it was just a small mistake, preventing it from reaching such a stage.”* Functioning within a well-structured IM network is crucial as it allows issues to be escalated to traditional and more experienced mediators, facilitating the design and implementation of effective interventions in context where traditional mediation outcomes are increasingly unlikely to be sustained over time: *“I would work behind the scenes while they take the lead. But I make sure that I’m contributing, even indirectly.”* - Khaled (Youth), Jordan.

While this approach holds significant value, it also underscores limitations of direct participation faced by youth in local peace processes, particularly the challenges of non-acceptance that participants may occasionally encounter: *“I’m not well-recognized as a mediator and I step into disputes that don’t align with my capabilities—for instance, mediating between two tribes, each with 60,000 members - there won’t be acceptance. But now if the disputes I engage in are (...) within my capacity, such as conflicts in neighborhoods or between friends, I can make a difference”* - Ahmad (youth), Jordan.

These challenges are considerably compounded for female youth IMs who are facing critical legitimacy issues: *“Not everyone will accept you (...). I once visited a doctor’s house on a mediation matter, and he threatened me.”* - Rania (youth), Jordan.

Leading mediation efforts can have a negative reputational impact on young women and heighten risks of SGBV, with some female IMs feeling discriminated against: *“You’re a woman; what are you doing here?” they said. Or there could also be security risks involved, like she goes to solve the issue, but there’s danger for her.*” - Noura (youth), Jordan

Despite the legitimacy challenges and security risks they face, female youth IMs often possess insights into the underlying social dynamics that fuel disputes, particularly those affecting women and marginalized groups. They are critical in creating female-oriented youth spaces where sensitive issues can be discussed as highlighted by Hanan (youth), Jordan.

Youth Mediators as Key Peace and Security Leader?

The presence of youth mediators in cohesive and well-structured networks is pivotal in conflict prevention. However, much like women, youth often face significant barriers when practicing mediation, particularly when engaging with individuals or groups outside their age bracket. This situation is particularly compounded for female youth mediators. Nevertheless, female and male youth, tend to assume expanded roles during compounded crises and active conflicts, as these situations disrupt existing social dynamics and create opportunities for more diversity. This was the case in Lebanon where female youth mediators have led emergency interventions, including communication strategies, the coordination of aid and conflict mediation. (see case study No. 05).

As Hassan (youth) in Sudan, noted, *“War brought about an opportunity for youth in Sudan to mediate local tensions and conflicts.”* Building on their expanded responsibilities in the displacement crisis, particularly in shelters, they have been able to cultivate proximity with communities and gain deeper insights into conflict patterns and root causes. Despite Sudanese society’s generational divides, shifting power dynamics and digital knowledge have empowered them to lead impactful interventions. Having identified hate speech as the primary driver of conflicts across the three states covered by the IM Sudan network (Kassala, Gedaref and Red Sea State), IM youth led dialogue sessions that involved high-level traditional leaders and native administrators. According to an older mediator, their engagement has proven essential for de-escalating conflicts and stabilizing the situation.

Youth and Social Media Engagement: Understanding its Role and Limitations



Platforms like TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook have created unparalleled opportunities for youth to voice their perspectives and connect across Arab countries. Yet, these same platforms have become breeding grounds for hate speech and misinformation. The reality is stark: content that incites conflict or spreads sensationalism attracts far more attention than mediation efforts or awareness campaigns. Understanding the role of social media and its limits is key.

“I might post a personal picture and get 600 likes, but if I post a political message [linked to mediation], I might only get 15 likes. (...) I’m not reaching the people at the heart of the disputes, those who don’t even understand what dialogue means.” - Ahmad (youth), Jordan.

In contrast, direct, face-to-face engagement has proven to be far more effective. The same mediator recounted: *“When I go to local councils to talk about youth development, they listen!”* Reflecting on his experience during the height of the Syrian crisis, he emphasized that social media had little influence on key decisions: *“Those joining as foreign fighters didn’t even know what Facebook was. If you didn’t bring them in, sit with them, and understand their perspective, the problem was left unaddressed.”*

Broadening opportunities were also visible at the level of the IM Lebanon network, where female youth have led needs assessment and direct mediation interventions and contributed to developing the network's identity and its legitimacy. By ramping up communication strategies, creatively integrating traditional mediation practices with online fact-checking, and building connections with other youth-led initiatives, the network underlines the potential for transformative impact when actively engaging youth mediators and capitalizing on empowerment opportunities.

Youth as a Critical Bridge between Digital and Traditional Peacebuilding

Fragile contexts are particularly vulnerable to the spread of misinformation, especially on social media platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, etc) as the rapid and facilitated circulation of “inflammatory content” is a key factor in rival factional fights (see UNDP, *What Is Up on WhatsApp?*). This situation became particularly evident across the world during COVID-19 times, as lockdowns, public health measures and the massive use of social media, led to an exponential spread of misinformation. This has been a leading factor behind the launch of ‘Sawab’ (Arabic for ‘accuracy’) in Lebanon (2022), a digital peacebuilding initiative aiming to provide a safe and neutral space for fact-checking away from traditional media, often perceived as mimicking partisan politics.

Capitalizing on the network's youth leadership and its diversity, it enabled it to capitalize on already existing digital peacebuilding infrastructures effectively, and meaningfully address the spread of misinformation that intensified during the most recent conflict. The Sawab platform — co-managed by one of the network's members — allowed the IMs, as sources “*present and trusted locally*” in their communities (Rami - youth, Lebanon) to disseminate timely updates and debunk some of the virally circulated misinformation that was fueling fear in communities and heightening conflict risks. Since the attacks of September 17 and 18, 2024, the platform has taken on an increasingly active role, partnering with other fact-checking initiatives to promote accurate information dissemination and was matched by exponential demand coming from communities and channeled through the network: “*Each person comes from their own community and already has access and trust from within their own area, which makes them able to engage effectively.*” - Rami (youth), Lebanon.

These efforts have not only effectively addressed misinformation and disinformation at the community level, it has also strengthened the role of more traditional peacebuilding actors during active conflict. Looking at it from the perspective of a co-owned network of interdependent systems, resources, values and skills (see Giessmann, *Embedded Peace*), the integration of the youth-led ‘Sawab’ peacebuilding initiative as part of the IM Lebanon network's service offer has contributed to increase its credibility and outreach.



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Case Study 03

Empowering and Building Insider Mediation Capacity for PWDs

PWD inclusion (two men with hearing impairment) in the Jordanian network has revealed the need for strengthening Insider Mediation capacity in marginalized and often secluded communities. Historically, PWDs with hearing impairment have had limited avenues for resolving their conflicts. They have a compounded access to both state-sponsored systems and mediation capacity. Therefore, their inclusion in Insider Mediation networks is crucial for ensuring that PWD-led mediation capacity is in place. It is also key to empowering PWDs within existing mediation capacity approaches to reduce their marginalization in broader society.

PWD Inclusion and the Need for Insider Mediation Capacity

In Zarqa, there is a large community of PWDs with hearing impairment.⁸² They face significant economic, social, and integration challenges. Despite being a vibrant community supported by a wide network of associations and clubs, they have limited opportunities for integration into society. This situation creates important frictions within and outside the hearing-impaired community. Competition over limited resources and perceived biases towards other types of disability often cause conflicts within the broader PWD community. Inside families, reluctance to allow marriages between individuals with hearing impairment constitutes another considerable source of tensions. They are more susceptible to make uninformed decisions due to a lack of access to information and are at high risk of exploitation. In the workplace, they are often vulnerable to abuse and poorly adapted environments, leading to severe consequences sometimes:

“Some of the hearing-impaired now hold university degrees - yes, a university degree but they’re still hired for lower-level jobs. For example, someone might work as a janitor and tasked with kitchen cleaning or be given other unpleasant duties. Many end up losing a hand, fingers, or facing other injuries because they can’t hear and the jobs they’re given aren’t suitable for them.” - Omar, IM with hearing impairment, Jordan. 🇯🇴

⁸² Data on the number of people with hearing impairment remain unavailable.

Conflicts that are specific to the hearing impairment community often escalate without resolution. The lack of proper access affects their capacity to use state-sponsored justice mechanisms and existing mediation capacity. The latter is often unaware of the specific challenges and dynamics affecting the community. In this context, leveraging insider capacity is essential, underscoring the need for targeted conflict analysis and mediation skills:

“For us, as individuals with hearing impairment, we benefited a lot [from capacity building on mediation]. We applied what we learned to our community, the community of the hearing impaired. Before, we didn’t know how to address issues diplomatically. We used to act impulsively when solving problems. Now we know how to approach them calmly and peacefully.” - Omar, IM with hearing impairment, Jordan. 🌐

The relationship between sign language interpreters and people with hearing impairment is often a cause of friction within the community due to high, often unaffordable costs: *“If I have to resolve an issue, I always need an interpreter with me. For example, if there’s a problem involving the hearing-impaired, I step in to mediate.” - Yousef, IM with hearing impairment, Jordan. 🌐*

Leveraging Insider Mediation capacity has enabled constructive dialogue between sign-language interpretation that might not otherwise occur, enabling IMs to bring interpreters and PWDs together to bridge perspectives and develop shared solutions. Insider Mediation capacity is essential to offer this kind of tailored conflict resolution. It is also key to better linking PWD-led Insider Mediation capacity with existing mediation mechanisms.

Empowering PWD in Mediation Processes

Meeting other local IMs regularly through the network, some of whom are elected local and traditional mediation figures, provides a unique platform for exposure, socialization and representation. It allows mediators from the network to understand the specific challenges affecting PWDs with hearing impairment for potential interventions outside the community. However, fostering cohesiveness within the network presents unique challenges. Effective interactions often depend on the availability of accessibility measures, particularly qualified sign-language interpreters familiar with the topics of discussion and associated terminology. These interpreters are often unavailable or lack the necessary skills, significantly hindering the socialization process, which typically relies on informal, in-person interactions beyond structured interventions.

Additionally, there is a critical challenge in ensuring that non-hearing-impaired IMs are adequately aware of how to meaningfully engage with PWDs for inclusive participation. As it stands, inclusion disproportionately relies on PWDs themselves, placing an additional burden on those already facing systemic barriers.

The inclusion of PWDs in Insider Mediation networks is a positive step and sheds a critical light on the potential for empowerment of PWD and marginalized communities in mediation processes. The experience also underscores the importance of ensuring the incremental inclusion of PWDs for meaningful integration into networks, while also prioritizing representation across gender and age.

Example of completed interventions

	Description	Objectives	Linkages with other types of I4P
<p>Dialogue sessions between sign language interpreters and members of the hearing-impairment community</p>	<p>Sign language interpretation and the costs associated are often a cause of friction within the hearing-impairment community and require dialogue to address some of the recurrent issues.</p>	<p>Hear from both sign language interpreters and the hearing impairment community on respective challenges, and identify common solutions.</p>	<p>CSO-based support (XII)</p>
<p>Mediation interventions within the hearing impairment community</p>	<p>Regular mediation interventions within the hearing impairment community were organized, particularly in relation to disputes arising between specialized associations and institutions</p>	<p>De-escalate conflicts and address recurring issues</p>	<p>CSO-based support (XII)</p>

Factors of Meaningful Inclusive Engagement

Cross-cutting (incl., PWDs)	Women	Youth
Access to specific spaces	Self-assessed as less threatening in the community than male mediators or traditional figures. Easier access to women, thus well suited for family conflicts which involve both men and women.	Strong presence on social media
In-depth understanding of respective community dynamics	Overrepresentation of women in the care sector (as educators, social workers, health care workers), which supports interventions relating to family issues	More flexible, less formal, approaches to mediation
Disrupted social dynamics and new opportunities for engagement	Ability to provide awareness and safe spaces	Leadership beyond niche areas
Presence of inclusivity enablers/allies in the IM networks, especially more senior male mediators		



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Case Study 04

Traditional Mediation: Conflict Prevention and Empowerment through Insider Mediation

Across the world, people overwhelmingly turn to traditional mediation, including customary and informal justice (CIJ) mechanisms to solve their everyday disputes.⁸³ In the Arab States region, traditional mediation is deeply intertwined with state formation and the legacies of colonial structures, remaining a cornerstone of conflict resolution and management. The term “traditional mediation” encompasses a wide array of practices that vary significantly across the region. These practices range from state-supported local governance systems and tribal or informal justice mechanisms to more spontaneous interventions led by respected community figures (e.g., Mukhtars – VI I4P). Traditional mediation closely intersects with the CIJ concept, which designates justice and dispute-resolution providers, practices and systems with varying degrees of integration within state structures.⁸⁴ CIJ-oriented traditional mediation addresses a broad spectrum of issues, including resource allocation, family conflicts, PSL cases, blood feuds, neighborhood disputes, and representation before local authorities. In many cases, they offer more people-centred outcomes of justice that align with local social norms and are more likely to be enforced.⁸⁵

In Sudan, the Native Administration system is described as a «rural governance system» that serves as an intermediary between the government and local communities.⁸⁶ This system plays a central role in managing resource-related conflicts, fostering relationships within and between tribes. It also addresses tensions between IDPs and host communities, and seek to resolve family disputes. Although officially dismantled in 1971 by President Jaafar al-Nimeiry in an effort to promote a unified national identity away from tribal affiliation, Native Administration structures persisted informally. They were later reinstated under President Omar al-Bashir’s rule (1989–2019), during which their authority expanded, including the power to levy local taxes. These measures strengthened their role in governance and local conflict management, while nevertheless raising concerns about potential alignment with central authorities.

⁸³ International Development Law Organization (IDLO), *Diverse Pathways to People-Centred Justice: Report of the Working Group on Customary and Informal Justice and SDG16+* (Rome: International Development Law Organization, September 2023).

⁸⁴ IDLO, *Diverse Pathways to People-Centred Justice*.

⁸⁵ IDLO, *Diverse Pathways to People-Centred Justice*.

⁸⁶ Humanitarian Policy Group, *Sudan’s Conflict – Civil Society and the War Between the Generals: Key Takeaways from a Roundtable with Sudanese and International Experts*, HPG Roundtable Learning Note, July 2023.

The three-tier Native Administration system, comprising the *Nazir*, *Omda*, and *Sheikh*⁸⁷ level, continues to be central to Sudan's ecosystem of governance, including in the post 2023 context. This system is influential across Sudan and eastern Sudan, and is shaped by practices unique to each tribe.

In eastern Sudan, the practice of *Gelad* is prominent and regulates most serious conflicts, including between tribes or with central authorities.⁸⁸ Persistent inter-tribal conflicts, often fueled by resource scarcity, have created cycles of violence that have required the establishment of additional traditional reconciliation committees to support existing mediation mechanisms,⁸⁹ highlighting some of the challenges faced by native administrators.

Insider Mediation as a Prevention Tool

The 2019 uprising, and the unprecedented humanitarian crisis faced by Sudan has weakened traditional mediation effectiveness locally, particularly in preventing conflicts. Acting as a missing link between traditional mediators and population, Insider Mediation plays an important role in preventing and de-escalating conflicts:

“They help minimize the root causes of violent conflicts and prevent disputes from escalating. For example, IMs have been instrumental in reducing tensions in host and refugee communities.” - Mustapha, Sudan.

Similar to the dynamics observed in Jordan (Case Study No. 02), IMs act as key intermediaries, intervening early to prevent conflicts from escalating to a point in which intervention by traditional mediators becomes necessary—a stage that is often too late for effective resolution.

“There were signs of conflict between two villages. If it weren't for the intervention of IMs, the conflict could have escalated. The mediators facilitated an agreement between the two villages, where they set terms and commitments from both sides to prevent conflict. This effort was accepted by both parties, who agreed to de-escalate and address the underlying causes of the conflict.” - Mustapha, Sudan.

The strength of the Sudan IM network lies also in its ability to offer diverse and innovative mediation practices. Some members specialize in traditional mediation approaches, while others bring expertise from civil society or academia, enabling them to address tensions differently: *“There was a conflict over water resources in the Gedaref State. Local mediators intervened and helped initiate a project to address the water crisis, which had been a major source of tension. Their efforts led to clear improvements and paved the way for resolving the issue.” - Mustapha, Sudan.*

The capacity of IM networks to create inclusive and inter-group spaces during active conflicts is valuable. IMs represent wider community perspectives (e.g., traditional mediation, civil society) and have strong peacebuilding potential, particularly in agreement enforcement:

⁸⁷ The *Nazir* is the highest-ranking tribal leader, often responsible for overseeing large tribal groups or regions. The *Omda* – or sub-chief, manages specific clans or localities within the tribe. The *Sheikh*, leads at the village or community level and is often responsible for day-to-day governance and dispute resolution.

⁸⁸ Tribal Leaders in Eastern Sudan Agree to Ease Tensions," *Dabanga*, October 13, 2023.

⁸⁹ "Eastern Sudanese Groups Sign Declaration of Principles," *Dabanga*, March 6, 2023.

“Local mediators⁹⁰ have played critical roles in peacebuilding efforts in Sudan, which has experienced conflicts and disputes since independence. While many peace agreements have been signed, Sudan remains trapped in a cycle of conflict due to various unresolved issues. One significant gap has been the lack of integration of local mediators into international peace processes. Often, solutions come from international actors who may not fully understand the needs of local communities.” - Mustapha, Sudan.

The flexibility of Insider Mediation in navigating diverse perspectives at the community level is critical in this regard. It has the potential to better manage peace agreements and act as a key link between traditional mediation actors and civil society actors. Insider Mediation is also best positioned to empower marginalized groups in traditional mediation processes, as mediation practitioners and justice seekers in CIJ systems.

Insider Mediation as an Empowerment Tool

Beyond its prevention role, the Sudan IM network plays a crucial role in fostering inclusive mediation practices. The Native Administration system builds on rigid hierarchies and tribal delineations. Its capacity to manage conflicts was disrupted by the 2019 uprising and renewed emphasis on national identity⁹¹ as well as resource-driven inter-tribal conflicts. The ongoing crisis since April 2023 has further weakened the Native Administration local governance system due to displacement, making the enforcement of decisions increasingly unpredictable. The severity of the crisis and the challenges faced by traditional mediation systems have opened new avenues for the inclusion and empowerment of historically excluded groups, particularly women and youth. Their engagement has proven essential for de-escalating conflicts and fostering more fluid inter-tribal dialogue. In the words of an older mediator:

“There was a conflict between two groups, and we brought the youth from both sides together. Their collaboration helped stabilize the situation.” - Hassan, Sudan.

While women have accessed new opportunities to lead local peace processes (see Case Study 01), their concerns and perspectives have often been overlooked in traditional mediation settings in Sudan. This exclusion has affected the rights of women, particularly their housing, land and property (HLP) rights,⁹² PSL rights and rights under criminal law. In this context, the work of women mediators is not only key to supporting better mediation results, it also helps women better advocating for their rights even in the absence of female IMs:

“Mediation allows me to support women not just in resolving conflicts but also in advocating for their rights. In Kassala, for example, we [with the women in the association she established] help women claim land rights and understand their entitlements.”
- Suma, Sudan.

As shown in this example, mediation interventions led by women mediators in Sudan have a strong potential for empowering women across CIJ processes. These efforts include facilitating the treatment of SGBV cases and raising awareness about HLP rights, as well as personal status law (PSL) rights (see Case Study No. 01). By leveraging their close relationships with traditional mediators and local communities, women mediators are empowering marginalized groups in traditional mediation/CIJ systems for more people-centred outcomes of mediation.

⁹⁰ Including traditional mediators.

⁹¹ Audrey Bottjen, *The Native Administration in Peace and Conflict: An Aid Worker's Primer* (Conflict Sensitivity Facility, March 31, 2022).

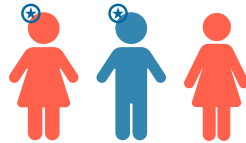
⁹² Bottjen, *The Native Administration in Peace and Conflict*.

Example of completed interventions

	Description	Objectives	Linkages with othertypes of I4P
Dispute interventions	<p>IMs provide spontaneous mediation support, particularly as tensions rise due to the massive presence of IDPs in Eastern States. They include preventing escalation when a dispute has already taken place, family related issues, resource sharing, etc. They use a blend of traditional and less traditional approaches.</p>	<p>Reduce tensions and the risk of escalated conflicts.</p>	<p>Local peace committees; peace ambassadors, Community-based reconciliation mechanisms, CSO-based support; religious networks</p>
Dialogue sessions	<p>Bringing together traditional leaders (including from the Native Administration) and key local peacebuilding actors to foster mutual understanding of conflict root causes in Kassala, Gedaref and Red Sea State.</p>	<p>Raise awareness on potentially overlooked conflict drivers.</p>	<p>Traditional leaders</p>

Opportunities for inclusion and protection of marginalized groups in mediation

- **Gender and youth empowerment:** Despite structural challenges faced by women and youth in mediation spaces, shifting conflict dynamics and the increased need for preventative measures have provided new opportunities for empowering traditionally marginalized groups (women and youth) as mediation practitioners and justice seekers. These new opportunities can be leveraged through support to joint interventions and capacity building in the area of SGBV, human rights (HLP/PSL, etc).



- **GBV protection for young mediators:** Young women experience heightened scrutiny, which may discourage their active participation in mediation processes. However, addressing these challenges presents opportunities such as support for joint interventions between more experienced female mediators and younger female mediators to enhance their protection and recognition in the community.



- **PWD inclusion:** The current approach places a disproportionate burden on PWDs to integrate in networks rather than proactively address environmental barriers. However, ensuring meaningful inclusion also presents opportunities for the supported networks, such as ensuring familiarity with sign language or strengthening mediators' capacity to adequately accommodate specific needs.



Insider Mediation: A Key HDP Enabler?

The diversity of IM networks underpins their capacity to effectively link Insider Mediation to other I4P, leveraging their approaches to drive collaboration and innovation with a wide range of actors. This was particularly evident as the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel escalated in September 2024 demonstrating not only Insider Mediation's capacity to catalyze I4P but their potential to contribute to collective outcomes across the HDP Nexus through "Little p" interventions.





Case Study 05

Linking Insider Mediation to Early Warning and Response: The Case of Lebanon

On 17 and 18 September 2024, hundreds of portable communication devices in Lebanon were remotely detonated by Israel, killing dozens, including children, and wounding thousands.⁹³ After a months-long escalation between Hezbollah and Israel on the country's southernmost border, the conflict spread across Lebanon. Since 8 October 2023, at least 13,819 people were injured and 3,100 people killed, including 192 children. This triggered an unprecedented internal displacement of over 875,000 people.⁹⁴ Many, including members of the Lebanon Insider Mediation network, fled northwards seeking refuge in public buildings and public schools. The widespread use of schools as shelters for displaced populations has led to a suspension of public education across Lebanon. The influx of displaced individuals has placed immense pressure on already scarce resources, straining the availability of basic necessities such as electricity, water and sanitation facilities.

In a context of entrenched sectarian divisions, weak governance, economic instability, and unresolved civil war traumas, tensions between the displaced and host communities carry high risks of sectarian violence resurgence: *“The war and subsequent displacement have intensified these issues. As these pressures grow, we expect tensions to increase between host communities and displaced populations. Addressing these differences through mediation is critical to prevent further conflicts.”* - Zaid (youth), Lebanon.

Coordinated mediation approaches have been essential both as an early warning and response mechanism, particularly in the context of limited capacity for state response. In doing so, the IM Lebanon network has closely intersected with other I4P types and created critical opportunities across the HDP Nexus, demonstrating its ability to proactively and preventively address rising needs:

“When the war began suddenly, we had to adapt quickly. We had prepared to be mediators, but we hadn't anticipated such large-scale displacement or the number of people needing shelters and assistance. The suddenness of the crisis was overwhelming, but the network allowed us to regroup and find ways to support each other, even virtually through social media.” - Amal, Lebanon.

⁹³ Israeli PM's Office Confirms Netanyahu Approved Lebanon Pager Attacks,” *France 24*, November 11, 2024.

⁹⁴ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Lebanon: Flash Update #42. Escalation of Hostilities in Lebanon*, November 7, 2024.

Initial response efforts focused on the following:

- Needs assessment of displaced people across Lebanon⁹⁵ in both shelters and private houses
- Awareness raising and capacity building on conflict prevention and management, and strategic use of digital peacebuilding initiatives (such as teaming up with other online fact-checking platforms)
- Targeted information sharing within and outside the network, leveraging built-in capacity for online fact-checking
- Targeted and coordinated on-site interventions to reduce tensions
- Coordination with other types of I4P and local authorities

From network to System for Early Warning and Response

The proactive deployment of the Lebanon IM network builds on its key strengths:

- strong cohesiveness
- adaptability of insider mediation as an approach
- availability of MHPSS support under the UNDP IM Project
- diversity of profiles (in terms of age, gender, educational and sectarian background)
- national reach
- youth and gender leadership across thematic and niche areas, including in the area of online fact-checking
- Robust connections with other types of I4P (local CSOs, faith-based networks, scouts) and local authorities.

These strengths have helped the network shift to a system for early warning and crisis response in the early days of the conflict, even as some IMs were themselves displaced:

“By sharing our experiences and working together, we’ve created a system to address problems regionally and ensure readiness for the next challenge. Coordination has been essential, allowing mediators across governorates to communicate and support each other effectively. This collaboration has strengthened our ability to deal with crises, particularly in displacement shelters, where flexibility and resourcefulness are crucial.”

- Zaid (youth), Lebanon.

⁹⁵ In particular, IDP shelters in Akkar, Aley, Barouk, Majdel Anjar, Qaa, Deir Al Ahmar, Jiyeh and Sayda.

This system is based on a comprehensive approach to needs assessment, which identified early on challenges in aid distribution as well as gaps in coordination and conflict sensitive communication with aid providers and volunteers:

“We began our intervention by visiting the schools hosting displaced people. We went to the first school and introduced ourselves as part of the network. We told them that we are not here to provide humanitarian aid but we can provide mediation support. The response was very welcoming, the school director told us: ‘thank you, we really need you’. The school director mentioned a problem: two families were sharing one classroom, and a fight broke out over the distribution of eggs. We said we would look into what could be done. We first identified who was the responsible focal point for the distribution of aid and then approached the women involved in the fight to understand their perspectives. We explained the issue to the school director and the focal point and the day after they came up with a system where each family nominates a representative who signs a paper after receiving food. The problem was solved after this and we did not have to come back.” - Hala & Aline (youth), Lebanon.

In support of targeted conflict mediation interventions, the IMs identified 300 shelter volunteers and IDPs and provided training on conflict mitigation and non-violent communication strategies across 25 shelters. Through their strong presence on the ground, IMs were able to intervene swiftly on-demand when tensions surfaced (generally around aid distribution) and provide personalized support when directly contacted by IDPs: *“For instance, I’ve been making repeated visits [to shelters], especially at night. Just last night, I visited a school where I met a family that was in a very difficult situation. When I had visited them a couple of days ago, they couldn’t talk to me. They were very withdrawn and only spoke in short sentences. But last night, after spending about two hours with them at the center, they began to open up. We talked about how they had left their home, their difficult financial situation, and the struggles they’ve been facing. They shared their emotions and stories, and by the time I left, they seemed much more relaxed and at ease. They even asked for my phone number, saying they’d like to reach out to me again. I gave them my number, and it felt like a small step forward. Just two days ago, they couldn’t even speak with me, and now they’re willing to stay in touch and continue the conversation. It’s progress.”* - Karim, Lebanon.

They also capitalized on existing I4P for social cohesion: *“We have scouts in the area who volunteer with us. I gathered them and other organizations for a meeting to propose starting a community kitchen to prepare food for displaced people and the elderly in our community. The kitchen is designed as a bridge-building initiative, bringing together people [from the host and displaced community] who previously had tensions or differences.”* - Karim, Lebanon

This shift from a more system-based approach to mediation builds on prior efforts to develop the network’s visual identity and enhance the network’s outreach capacity:

“The network’s visibility and feedback from the public have demonstrated its value. If we had more resources and support, we could achieve even greater results in promoting peace and addressing social challenges.” - Zaid (youth), Lebanon.

Design of the National Response Initiative

The IM Lebanon network came together to design a National Response Initiative aimed at reducing tensions and promoting positive communication and conflict resolution within shelters and host communities. Recognizing the immediate need to address the heightened stress, misunderstandings, and conflicts emerging in these environments, the network held a series of meetings to plan an initiative that would equip volunteers, youth, and shelter workers with essential skills in active listening, non-violent communication, and conflict sensitivity. The National Response Initiative is implemented through workshops across Lebanon, providing training on active listening, conflict de-escalation, and peer support. By fostering skills in empathetic listening and constructive communication, the initiative empowers volunteers and shelter workers to manage interpersonal disputes, reduce tensions, and promote a supportive shelter atmosphere. The workshops are designed to build long-term capacity in conflict management, equipping participants to respond sensitively to the needs of displaced populations and create a more cohesive community environment.

Leveraging ‘little p’ interventions across the HDP Nexus

Targeted information sharing within the network (IMs) and outside (communities, aid actors) and the production of ready-to-use high quality information has helped create ‘little p’ opportunities that contribute to collective and localized HDP Nexus outcomes. With a focus on trust building and social cohesion, ‘little p’ interventions by mediators have prioritized capacity development by leveraging existing I4P and institutions and the resources of broader society to support peacebuilding, conflict prevention and management.⁹⁶ Their interventions have delivered results across the HDP Nexus by facilitating impartial humanitarian aid, promoting social cohesion through development activities, and strengthening community resilience to conflict. The network's capacity to reduce tensions around aid distribution can be leveraged to build trust in aid efforts and facilitate access of humanitarian actors, particularly through knowledge sharing. The network's systemic reach across sectarian lines can help mitigate the persistent challenge within the HDP Nexus of engaging local ‘peace’ actors in humanitarian responses, where neutrality and impartiality are frequently scrutinized or perceived as compromised. In a context where HDP interventions maintain a state and UN centric focus, the potential of Insider Mediation as an accelerator of localization remains underutilized. As catalysts for broader I4P efforts, IMs represent a critical asset for advancing collective outcomes across the HDP Nexus.

⁹⁶ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Results Group 4 on Humanitarian-Development Collaboration, *Exploring Peace within the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN)*, issue paper, October 2020.

Examples of completed interventions (Lebanon)

	Description	Objectives	Linkages with other types of I4P
Needs assessment of displaced people across Lebanon	Conduct of needs assessment on Lebanon's five main shelters (in the early days of the crisis).	Highlight needs nationally and develop a comprehensive and coherent network response.	Early-warning and response (IX), IGO/civil society organization (CSO) based support organizations networks (XII)
Awareness raising and capacity building on conflict prevention and management, and strategic use of digital peacebuilding infrastructures	Awareness and capacity building sessions for shelter volunteers on tension and conflict reduction (300 participants, volunteers and IDPs/ 25 shelters).	Build broader capacity for tension reduction and reduce the need for direct interventions.	Civil society platforms, religious networks (VI)
Targeted information sharing within and outside the network, leveraging built-in capacity for online fact-checking	Centralization and production of information to support the network's response.	Development of a comprehensive and coordinated response, provision of high value information to aid actors and communities.	Early-warning and response (IX), IGO/civil society organization (CSO) based support organizations networks (XII)
Targeted and coordinated on-site interventions to reduce tensions	These interventions are demand-driven and include one-on-one psychosocial support, activities for children, conflict reduction interventions, community initiatives (e.g., community kitchens)	Alleviate tensions before they arise and mitigate tensions within displaced communities.	Local peace committees (I), civil society platforms, religious networks (VI).
Coordination with other types of I4P and local authorities	Broader coordination with key peace actors, such as aid volunteers, local authorities and religious networks.	Anticipate tensions with the host communities and relay needs and challenges faced by the communities.	Local peace committees, civil society platforms, religious networks

Factors of Successful Early Recovery Interventions by the network

Youth and gender leadership within a cohesive and varied network



Institutionalization of best practices within the network and dissemination



Tailored use of acquired skills (needs assessment, coordination, mediation interventions) and targeted support (including psychosocial support)



Opportunities for strengthening HDP results through Insider Mediation

- **Resource mobilization and strategic partnerships:** The growing demand for mediation, coupled with the commitment of mediators within their communities, underscores a significant opportunity to mobilize resources and forge strategic partnerships. Enhanced resource access for mediators has the potential to leverage other I4P and drive greater impact across the HDP Nexus.
- **Leveraging community trust for sustainable engagement:** The trust mediators enjoy in their communities provides an opportunity to better formalize referral pathways (to other I4P or institutions) and integrate support from other stakeholders. While lessening mediators' workload, such approach can also strengthen coordination across the HDP Nexus.
- **Advancing institutionalization for legitimacy:** The need for institutionalization of mediation networks was raised across the networks. It presents an opportunity to formalize the role of mediators and enhance visibility and legitimacy of the networks in support of HDP interventions.
- **Engaging the UN and other HDP actors:** By engaging the UN and partners in promoting Insider Mediation work, IMs can more effectively contribute to HDP collective outcomes.

Testimonials from Community Members

"I have had the privilege of working alongside Karim (IM Lebanon) for nearly five years as part of the local Cultural and Social Committee. In addition, I am an active member of the Muslim Scout Association of Lebanon. When the conflict erupted in September 2024, we immediately began providing essential assistance to displaced families in our village.

Karim played a key role in supporting us during this time. He provided training on conflict sensitivity and practical guidance on how to deliver aid efficiently and responsibly.

In our village, there are two Scout groups that traditionally operated independently. One of Karim's key initiatives was to unite both groups to coordinate the delivery of aid. I found this approach incredibly impactful—it strengthened the community's response to the crisis and helped strengthen trust and solidarity among its members. It was a vital step in reconnecting the social bonds within our village."

Adnan, scout volunteer

"At first, I couldn't believe it when my husband agreed to attend a workshop with me. Even our kids were shocked—they couldn't imagine their father participating in something like this. Before, he would always say these workshops were a waste of time and refuse to go. But this time, he surprised us all. I told him, 'We'll only stay for half an hour,' but we ended up staying much longer because he was truly engaged and enjoying it. He didn't even notice how quickly the time passed.

After the session, he told me he really liked it and would definitely attend again if there's another one. He appreciated the meaningful discussions and said he learned a lot.

For me, this was an eye-opener. These workshops create a space where couples can communicate openly, better understand each other, and reconnect. I realized that many of the issues I thought were unique to us are shared by so many others.

What makes this initiative so special is the environment it creates. Unlike sessions with religious leaders, where people often hesitate to speak openly, here everyone felt free to share their thoughts and struggles without judgment. The IM has a unique way of putting you at ease—she made us feel safe and heard, allowing us to open up in ways we never expected.

Personally, I found these sessions incredibly impactful and far more effective than simply watching something online. This initiative is essential; without spaces like this, men and women would continue to misunderstand each other. These workshops bridge that gap through dialogue and understanding. I was so encouraged by the experience that I told my son and his wife to attend the next session—it's too valuable to miss.

We need more sessions like this. The discussions are deep, insightful, and full of learning. One session is not enough—there's so much more to talk about, so many things we still need to understand and address. I hope this initiative grows and reaches more people because it truly makes a difference."

Zeina

"Over my 30-year career in education, I have witnessed increasing verbal and physical violence among students, exacerbated by societal issues, exposure to inappropriate media, and instability in the region. Recognizing the importance of creating a positive school environment, I have worked continuously to address these challenges through innovative conflict-resolution strategies.

I had the opportunity to attend a training on non-violent communication and mediation techniques, which was later enhanced through a partnership with mediators from the network. It is something that I have focused on for years and I wanted to be better at it. Initially, I encountered skepticism from some colleagues, who viewed these techniques as time-consuming or impractical. At times, I began to doubt my approach, questioning whether I was making the right decisions for the students and the school. However, through the guidance and support of the mediators, I regained my confidence. Their expertise reassured me that my efforts were not only valid but essential to building a culture of peace within the school. Their encouragement helped me stay focused on the bigger picture, reminding me that meaningful change requires time and persistence.

Through the implementation of non-violent communication techniques in my school, I have witnessed a 65 per cent reduction in violence, particularly in the playground and hallways. Key to this initiative is the active role of mediators, including both myself and a selected group of student leaders. I have trained young mediators—children as young as nine—to intervene in minor conflicts among peers using non-confrontational language. Importantly, I monitor their progress, recognize their efforts publicly, and rotate the roles. Despite initial resistance, parental complaints about violence have decreased by 80 per cent, and students are learning lifelong skills in communication, emotional regulation, and empathy. One of my proudest moments was witnessing students autonomously resolve conflicts using these techniques, returning to their classes with the simple affirmation, «We are reconciled.»

The training provided by the mediators deepened my understanding of the broader applications of non-violent communication. Their expertise demonstrated that these techniques are not limited to schools but are equally relevant in addressing conflicts within families, marriages, and communities. With their support, I no longer doubt my ability to implement these strategies effectively and confidently engage with students, parents, and colleagues to resolve disputes."

Nadine, school administrator

Conclusion

To the question **what is the impact of Insider Mediation under this Project and how does it connect to other peacebuilding initiatives within an I4P and HDP Nexus framework**, the case studies reveal that the highly inclusive nature of Insider Mediation (women, youth, PWDs) is a **catalyst of peace infrastructures** and makes it a key contributor to the WPS and YPS agendas in the three pilot countries—Sudan, Lebanon, and Jordan. The publication highlights that when structured into organized networks, Insider Mediation can drive contributions across the HDP Nexus beyond peace interventions and accelerate localization⁹⁷—provided it is effectively leveraged and fully developed. Given its focus on inclusivity, Insider Mediation is found to **challenge dominant norms—particularly gender and social norms**—by enabling greater participation and representation of marginalized groups. This contributes to their **empowerment**, whether as mediation practitioners and justice seekers **in CIJ systems**, where existing barriers often limit their access and influence.

However, the case studies also highlight the **incremental nature** of Insider Mediation network development. This development process requires to **first create network cohesiveness at the national level** before it can translate into progress at the regional level. Building **meaningful spaces for socialization** at both levels is a time-intensive and iterative process, particularly in crisis and conflict settings where movement and communication are often restricted.

As such, this publication presents early-stage findings from the networks established under the UNDP IM Project. While these networks have yet to reach full maturity, they have already demonstrated **significant impact**. By **catalyzing I4P, harnessing localization potential within the HDP Nexus, challenging dominant norms and empowering marginalized groups**, they present a **valuable model** with strong **potential for expansion** across other countries in the Arab States region. Such results emphasize the need for **further thematic exploration** in order to best calibrate interventions going forward, particularly with regard to Insider Mediation's **interactions with CIJ systems** or inclusivity.

They also highlight the need for further **contextual analysis and adaptation** as crises deepen in the Arab States. The escalation of longstanding conflicts has weakened already fragile governance structures in the region. In Gaza, this translated into the near-collapse of the justice system. In Yemen, conflict escalation worsened one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, while Lebanon remains highly vulnerable to volatile regional dynamics. At the same time, profound transformations are unfolding, including a hoped-for transition to civilian rule in post-Assad Syria, alongside foreseen reconstruction efforts and the return of displaced populations. These fast-paced changes underscore the urgency of scaling up support for context-based, preventative and bottom-up peace infrastructures. While Insider Mediation networks have demonstrated their adaptability to crises, their potential remains to be fully explored, particularly in terms of cross-boundary engagement. Therefore, it necessitates securing **robust engagement from UN agencies and development partners** to fully leverage this potential over time.

⁹⁷Peace interventions, particularly 'little p' interventions prioritize capacity development by leveraging institutions and the resources of broader society to support peacebuilding, conflict prevention and management.

Annex

Tools utilized by the IM networks

Info Sheet on Tension Reduction Efforts During Conflict

Forward Letter:

Dear Volunteers,

Thank you for your incredible efforts during these challenging times. Your dedication and compassion in supporting displaced individuals are invaluable and make a real difference in the lives of those in need.

We understand how difficult the current circumstances are, and we hope you are keeping well. Please remember that your well-being is equally important. Take time for yourself whenever possible, prioritize your mental health, and know that it's okay to reach out for support.

Your resilience and courage are inspiring. Thank you once again for all that you do.

Take good care of yourselves.

Insider Mediators Network – Lebanon

Here are a few points to keep in mind:

1. About Conflict

- Conflict can be defined as a clash or disagreement between individuals or groups characterized by opposing interests, goals, or viewpoints.
- Connectors are elements or factors that unite people across lines of division. They are the positive aspects that can bridge differences and unite individuals or groups, promoting cooperation and reducing tensions.
- Dividers are elements or factors that drive people apart, often contributing to conflict or preventing its resolution. They are the issues or differences that exacerbate mistrust, fear, and division among individuals or groups.

2. Psychological First Aid

- Psychological First Aid (PFA) is an immediate, supportive response to reduce acute distress and promote adaptive coping following a crisis or traumatic event.
- It involves ensuring safety, providing emotional comfort, and connecting individuals with social and practical support.
- PFA is not formal therapy but rather a way to help stabilize those affected and foster resilience.

What We Should Do

- Introduce yourself clearly with your name and role.
- Ask the person how you can help using simple, clear language.
- Listen patiently and allow the person to express their feelings without interruption.
- Show empathy and validate their feelings, acknowledging that their reactions are normal.

- Provide reliable information and be honest about what you do not know.
- Always be present, make an effort to help them feel safe, and be patient.
- Use a calm and natural tone of voice, and remain gentle in your approach.
- Involve them in matters that ensure their well-being or the safety of their loved ones.

What We Should Not Do:

- Do not impose your help or act like a hero.
- Do not pressure the person to talk if they do not want to.
- Do not interrupt, judge, or talk about yourself or your own issues.
- Do not make false promises or provide unrealistic assurances.
- Avoid using very technical or specialized terms.
- Do not share other people's stories or experiences.
- Do not shout, speak too quickly, or appear impatient.
- Do not violate confidentiality or shared trust.

3. To do, Not to Do in Active Listening

Do:

1. Maintain visual contact.
2. Use calm verbal affirmations.
3. Ask clarifying questions to help people express themselves.
4. Rephrase and paraphrase the conversation.
5. Be patient and present.
6. Use open body language.
7. Acknowledge emotions.
8. Focus on understanding the speaker's perspective.

Do Not:

1. Interrupt or finish the sentence.
2. Get distracted.
3. Judge or criticize.
4. Assume or jump to conclusions.
5. Focus on what you want to answer.
6. Use closed or defensive body language.
7. Ignore emotional signals.
8. Dominate the conversation.

4. Key components of de-escalation in NVC

1. Observe the situation objectively without attaching blame or judgment.
2. Express your genuine feelings to communicate your emotional state clearly.
3. Identify and articulate your underlying needs without accusing the other person.
4. Make requests instead of demands, allowing the other person the freedom to choose.
5. Listen empathically and reflect on the other person's emotions to show understanding.
6. Use "I" statements to avoid triggering defensive reactions.
7. Maintain calm, open body language to create a non-threatening environment.
8. Stay focused on the present issue and avoid bringing up past conflicts.

Remember:

Everyone has a natural way of coping. Encourage people to use their positive coping strategies, remind them how they coped in the past, and tell them what things helped them feel better. This will help them feel stronger and capable of taking care of themselves.

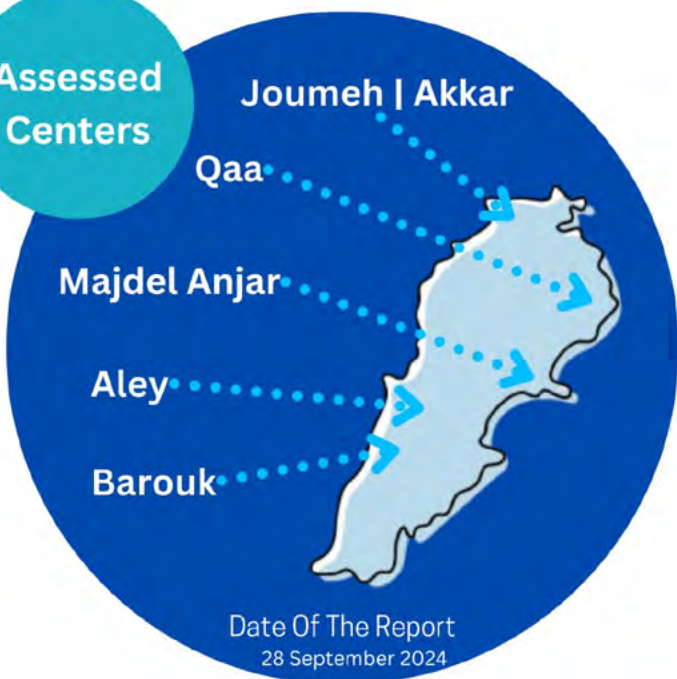
People are going through a hard time at the moment; stay patient. If you feel you are losing your patience, take a step back and let someone else handle it; there's no shame in that.

Feel free to reach out to the network for any further support.



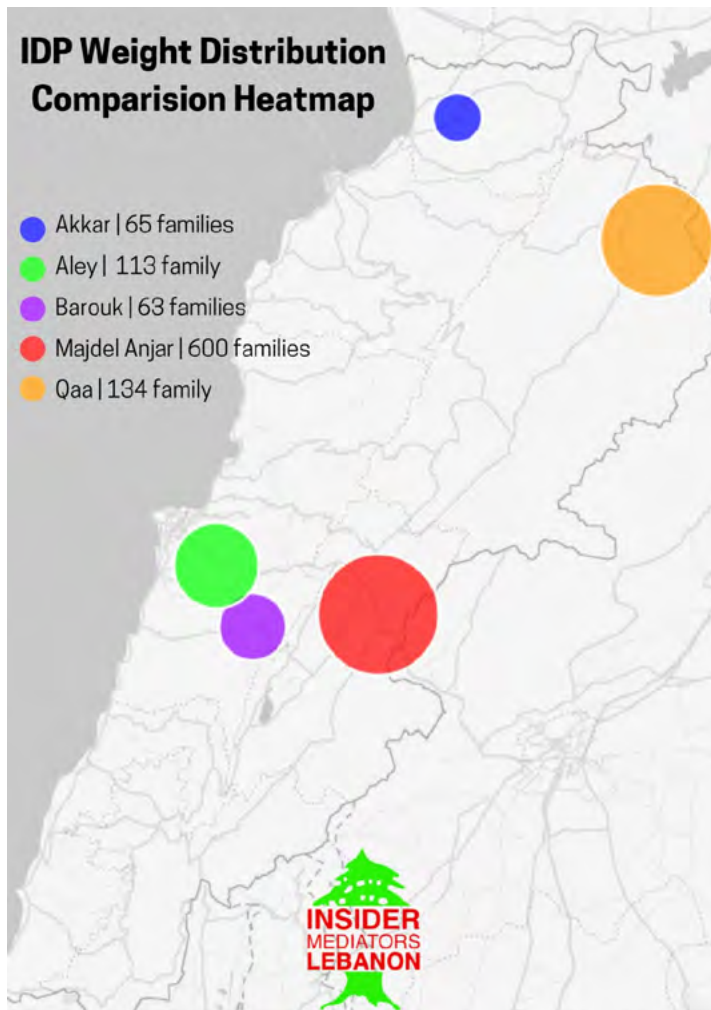
Report on IDP Shelters in Lebanon

Assessed Centers



IDP Weight Distribution Comparison Heatmap

- Akkar | 65 families
- Aley | 113 family
- Barouk | 63 families
- Majdel Anjar | 600 families
- Qaa | 134 family



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