



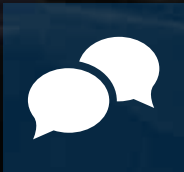
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Supporting Insider Mediation:

STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE TO CONFLICT AND TURBULENCE



GUIDANCE NOTE

United Nations Development Programme

GUIDANCE NOTE



United Nations Development Programme

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Foreword

Turbulent political transitions, recurrent tensions and instability, and conflicts over land and natural resources are some of the complex challenges to peace faced today by numerous countries. This has had disastrous impact on human life, weakened social cohesion and trust, and put a severe toll on progress towards sustainable development. Building resilient societies and preventing the breakout of tensions into violent manifestations requires garnering national capacities and skills to resolve conflict peacefully.

The concept of insider mediation emerged from this recognition that key actors in countries at risk of conflict must be equipped with the appropriate skills for mediation and dialogue. All the more as experience has shown that external mediation is not always possible or desired by countries.

Insider mediation draws upon the abilities of institutions or individuals that are seen as “insiders” within a given context. These civic, political and governmental leaders have the invaluable advantages of being trusted and respected individuals, and bring with them a higher legitimacy, cultural closeness with the parties, and an ability to convene all relevant stakeholders and also those impacted by the conflict. In recent years insider mediators have proved successful in ensuring peaceful elections; facilitating dialogue, breaking political deadlocks and establishing the groundwork for formal peace negotiations in a number of countries.

Recognizing the power and the vast potential of empowering insider mediators, UNDP and the European Union (EU) have partnered—through a new two-year programme that spanned 2012-2013 and was funded by the EU’s Instrument for Stability —to invest in equipping national and local actors in internal conflict management processes with skills for dialogue and constructive negotiation. Drawing upon this initiative, and on a decade of experience in supporting national counterparts in preventing and resolving violent tensions, as well as recent efforts established through the partnership, this Guidance Note is the first attempt at documenting and distilling best practices on insider mediation.

Primarily written for practitioners seeking to understand and support insider mediators, in particular staff from the UN, the EU, and other international organizations, the Guidance Note should also be of benefit to insider mediators. “Supporting Insider Mediation: Strengthening resilience to conflict and turbulence” aims to further open the discussion on the challenges and opportunities in building national capacities for conflict prevention. With it, we hope to bring greater awareness and encourage more international investment in empowering these key individuals- including women leaders- with the appropriate skills to broker peace.



**INSIDER MEDIATORS
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THE GROUNDWORK
FOR FORMAL PEACE
NEGOTIATIONS**

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Executive Summary

Peace is not an elusive goal, but certainly one that requires sustained effort, well before and long after the signing of an “official” peace agreement. Disagreements over reforms, tensions around natural resources, and conflicts that emerge as a result of political transitions all require constant negotiation, dialogue, and compromise. As new alliances emerge and old ones falter, the risks of disagreements igniting conflict – at both local and national levels – become increasingly real. Political transitions, after all, especially in fragile and conflict-affected countries, do not occur along a smooth or simple trajectory; the peacebuilding path is fraught with tensions, creating turbulence that impacts the political and social fabric in profound and, sometimes, unexpected ways.

Unlike a United Nations (UN) appointed Special Envoy, or the representative of an interested third party, insider mediators work from within a given context, leveraging their knowledge, relationships and reputations to prevent and resolve these on-going conflicts that emerge as a result of turbulent transitions. Unlike the interventions of external actors, there is no pre-defined start-date or “deadline” for the work of insider mediators; more often than not, these individuals, groups or entities work through their networks in a sustained manner, keeping peacebuilding processes on track, diffusing conflicts constructively and promoting dialogue exactly when and where it is needed most. The increase in decentralized and recurring violence, combined with waves of popular protests, election-related conflicts, and tensions around natural resources has meant that there is an increasing demand and scope for the work of insider mediators. Indeed, there is an ever-pressing realisation that short-term, international interventions alone are insufficient to address the complex and inter-dependent dynamics of the conflicts we witness today.

In collaboration with bilateral and multi-lateral development partners, especially the UN Department for Political Affairs (DPA) and the European Union (EU), and the Governments of Sweden, Switzerland, Finland, Norway, the Netherlands, the UK, Luxembourg, Canada, and Denmark among others, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has played a leading role in providing capacity development and accompaniment to insider mediators, and insider mediation processes. In countries as diverse as Bolivia, Fiji, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Nepal, Timor-Leste, and Uganda - to mention only a few - UNDP has actively designed and implemented engagements to support insider mediators and insider mediation processes, whether in the context of elections, local conflicts, power transfers or mediation processes. Funded by the EU's Instrument for Stability, this Guidance Note represents the first effort to synthesise the insights garnered from these experiences into operational guidance for practitioners from the UN, the EU and other international organizations; it is hoped that this Guidance Note can also be of use to insider mediators themselves.

As outlined in part one of this Guidance Note on “Understanding Insider Mediators,” insider mediation is a cost-effective means of building national capacity for conflict prevention. Insider mediators - working overtly or behind the scenes - use their *influence* and *legitimacy* to constructively alter the behaviour, relationships and trajectory of parties in conflict. Using facilitation, dialogue and mediation, they work horizontally and vertically, formally and informally, at local, regional and national levels. There are five key ways in which insider mediators affect change: first, they help identify or create entry-points, often paving the way for official negotiations to begin; two, they build consensus between stakeholders, bridging differences around key stumbling blocks in peacebuilding processes; three, they play direct mediation roles, thereby actively preventing and/or managing a particular conflict; four, they play important advocacy roles, connecting national-level processes with wider public opinion; and, lastly, they act as early warning “beacons,” ensuring that action is taken on an issue before tensions can escalate into violence. Beyond these more defined roles, insider mediators also help initiate and deepen dialogue across the board, planting ideas and shifting discourse towards peace in the context of debates across society.

Not every insider mediator or every insider mediation process requires the support of external actors; many play important roles – both under the radar and directly in the limelight – independently of bilateral or multi-lateral actors. However, when there is limited political will, low capacity, the absence of trusted intermediaries and/or safe spaces, or when there is low momentum around a particular process, external actors can carefully support insider mediators to play constructive roles or catalyse necessary changes. It is important to note, however, that interventions

of this nature can be risky – for external actors and insider mediators alike; those situations most likely to require external support are often those where the risks are greatest and, therefore, where the most caution is needed.

Consequently, as Part Two of this Guidance Note on “Supporting Insider Mediators,” outlines, there are five steps that external actors can take to mitigate these risks: step one requires undertaking a conflict and situation analysis, which reveals the formal and informal systems, traditions, entities and individuals that could support insider mediation processes. Step two necessitates identifying and analysing potential levels of engagement, including whether to focus on community-based leaders, middle-level influencers, or high-level leaders – or a combination of two or all three. Step three entails identifying insider mediators, which requires “out of the box” thinking and looking in unconventional places, leveraging training programmes, analysis processes and networks to identify potential change-makers. Step four requires the development of an engagement and capacity-building strategy, which should ideally combine skills-building with mentoring, shadowing, exchange visits, accompaniment, and other experiences which foster deep learning. And, lastly, step five focuses on co-building “infrastructures for peace” (I4P) – or “platforms for conflict transformation” – which can ensure the sustainability of these endeavours.

These steps are key to ensuring capacity-building programmes for supporting insider mediators are robust, conflict-sensitive and tailored to the context, actors and objectives of the engagement. As Part Three of this Guidance Note on “Strategies and approaches for supporting insider mediators” explains, experience has shown that engagements to support insider mediators are strengthened by careful attention to details such as reframing issues, emphasizing positive developments, building trust over time, and conducting separate engagements or “caucuses” with parties when tensions are still high. Gender issues are also a vital consideration: women have often been marginalized and their decision-making power minimised in the context of State-centric peace processes and political transitions. In line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325, engagements should seek to increase the number of women insider mediators by thinking creatively, creating safe spaces and ensuring times and locations of engagement-related activities take into account cultural norms around women’s participation.

Best practices from this field are still emerging, and it is hoped that this Guidance Note will stimulate greater dialogue amongst practitioners working to support insider mediators, and amongst insider mediators themselves. However, UNDP’s experience has shown that certain strategies, approaches and principles are more likely to lead to positive outcomes than others; for example, flexibility is fundamental for insider mediation as such processes cannot be rushed and yet, simultaneously, insider mediators and those supporting them must be prepared to seize opportunities that may arise unexpectedly. Similarly, institutionalization can be key to such endeavours, but there is a balance to be found between the flexibility of informal processes, and the legitimacy that often comes with formalized entities. Good practice indicates, furthermore, that the sustainability of endeavours should not be dependent on external support and, where possible, should build upon pre-existing communities of practice, even if such entities are likely to come with burdens of perceptions and certain biases which may need to be addressed. These good practices, and those outlined in Part Three of this Guidance Note highlight the complex trade-offs involved in insider mediation processes and endeavours to support insider mediators; to succeed, engagements must be anchored in the principles of inclusivity, national participation and local ownership.

Looking ahead, it is evident that the demand for insider mediators is likely to rise. To further improve our engagements in support of insider mediators, UNDP is finalising a training manual for UN, EU and staff of other regional and international entities. It is hoped that enhanced training in this domain will further increase the cadre of international staff with the required mix of technical and non-technical expertise to support insider mediators in their efforts to foster peace and peacebuilding processes. A follow-on initiative to provide wider support for insider mediation will soon be launched by UNDP, the DPA and the EU.



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TODAY**

Introduction

A steady state of perfect peace or everlasting development is an impossible goal. Comprehensive peace agreements such as the ones in South Africa in 1994, Guatemala in 1996, Sudan in 2005 and Nepal in 2006 have already been put to the test by significant new challenges to peace and stability. This is not to say that they did not mark important and, indeed, essential milestones in the histories of these countries: they were moments of transformational change. Yet, at both national and community levels, peace needs to be sustained on an almost daily basis. Recurring conflicts need to be resolved, new tensions managed, and consensus built around contested priorities before tensions lead to violence.

The same turbulence, which arises from rapid technological advances, developments in the global economy and the effects of climate change - catalysing new conflicts in countries and communities - leads to forms of development which demand constant renegotiation. Actors who may be opposed to, or in conflict with, one another have to form new coalitions and alliances to agree upon common priorities as their circumstances undergo rapid change; recurring conflicts over land and natural resources have to be repeatedly resolved before they precipitate violence; political transitions have to be peacefully managed; and, the consequences of resource and food insecurity must be rapidly addressed before they provoke social breakdown, and potentially loss of life.

Unlike external mediation by an actor such as the United Nations (UN) or a regional organization, insider mediation draws upon the abilities of institutions or individuals that are seen as “insiders” within a given context to broker differences, build consensus, and resolve conflict. Locally contextualised mediation processes led by insider mediators can be key to managing these challenges in a peaceful and constructive manner. In recent years, insider mediators have helped ensure peaceful elections in countries as diverse as Ghana, Nepal and, Uganda; they have helped resolve recurring local conflicts in Chad, Kyrgyzstan, Peru, and Timor-Leste; brought about a multi-party coalition Government in Lesotho, following the country’s first peaceful transfer of power in 2012; ensured that Tunisia has moved forward despite facing significant political and security challenges; developed entry-points for Kofi Annan’s mediation process following post-election violence in Kenya in 2008; built consensus around national priorities in Bolivia, Fiji, and Mauritania; and, provided substantive support for the peace agreements in Colombia and the Philippines.

In most instances, initial capacity development and accompaniment for these mediators has been discreetly provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), often working in close partnership with the UN Department for Political Affairs (DPA), and more recently the European Union (EU). Best practices from these experiences are yet to be synthesized into operational guidance for future practitioners and their international supporters. One consequence has been that, unlike the large-scale investments made in the peacekeeping capacities of international and regional organizations to intervene and stabilize conflicts, only very limited organized support has been provided for insider mediation. This Guidance Note is an initial attempt to provide this synthesis in the form of what will hopefully be a “living document” that can be updated as more insights become available.

Many critical challenges remain for the work of both “insiders” and their external counterparts, including: identifying credible insiders; developing entry-points; supporting insider mediation processes without undermining their credibility or independence; and, ensuring sustainability for the results of insider mediation endeavours.

The primary target audience of this Guidance Note is those seeking to understand and support insider mediators, especially staff from the UN, the EU, and other international organizations. The Guidance Note may, however, also be of benefit to insider mediators themselves. Experiences collected for the purposes of this Guidance Note draw upon insights from the past decade, starting around 2004 when systematic support for such work was initiated by UNDP in partnership with the DPA and other partners.

The Guidance Note is organized into three parts:

- Part One: Understanding insider mediation and insider mediators. This section of the Guidance Note explores the concept of insider mediation, the types of approaches used, and the work undertaken by insider mediators.
- Part Two: Supporting insider mediators. This section of the Guidance Note explores why, when and how external parties can support insider mediators, and provides a step-by-step guide to supporting insider mediators and their work, including: the identification of insider mediators, through to the development and application of their relevant capacities; and concluding with longer-term approaches to sustaining and institutionalizing their work.
- Part Three: Strategies and approaches for supporting insider mediators. This section of the Guidance Note provides an overview of strategies and approaches for supporting insider mediators, including: guidance and tips for designing effective processes; issues and challenges in enabling and strengthening the participation of women in insider mediation processes; good practices for supporting insider mediation; and, guidance on how to build the capacity of external partners to support the work of insider mediators.



**INSIDER MEDIATION
DRAWS UPON
THE ABILITIES OF
INSTITUTIONS OR
INDIVIDUALS THAT
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A GIVEN CONTEXT TO
BROKER DIFFERENCES,
BUILD CONSENSUS,
AND RESOLVE CONFLICT**

PART 1: UNDERSTANDING INSIDER MEDIATION AND INSIDER MEDIATORS

Part One of this Guidance Note explains the concept and practice of insider mediation and insider mediators, paying particular attention to: definitions and types of insider mediation; the changing context in which insider mediation takes place; the characteristics of insider mediators; and, an overview of the methodologies used by insider mediators to undertake their work.

1.1 WHAT IS INSIDER MEDIATION?

Defining Insider Mediation

International actors are increasingly turning to mediation as the preferred tool for enabling national actors to address conflicts, including over contested reforms, elections, and development priorities. Indeed, in light of the comparatively large financial implications of peacekeeping engagements and the high costs in terms of both lives and livelihoods of the failure to prevent conflict, international actors are choosing mediation over and above other tools as a cost-effective and time-tested means of preventing violence, managing political turbulence and resolving complex conflicts.

This has led to a significant increase in the number of engagements by “traditional” mediators, such as those efforts led by third-party government actors, the UN, and mediation-specific Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), for example. Additionally, international actors increasingly recognize the power and potential of what are referred to as insider mediators. Over the course of the past decade, insider mediators have played critical roles in laying the groundwork for formal peace negotiations, mediating recurring conflicts over land and natural resource, building consensus around reforms in the context of political transitions; and, facilitating violence-free elections.

These roles have also led to a progressively greater recognition by the UN and the international community at large of the significance of building national capacities for conflict prevention. The 2001 report of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Armed Conflict, the landmark UN General Assembly resolution A/57/337 on the prevention of armed conflict, and UNDP’s Strategic Plan for 2014–2017 as approved by its Executive Board in January 2014, all place significant emphasis on the development and application of these capacities.

Mediation can be defined as a “process of assisted negotiation between two or more parties,” wherein third parties help prevent, manage or resolve violent or destructive conflicts between governments, opposition parties, armed groups, civilians and/or other affected stakeholders.

Insider mediation processes preserve the essence of this definition: insider mediators also support negotiations - as well as a variety of other forms of dialogue - to prevent, manage and resolve conflict. What distinguishes insider mediation from other forms of mediation is that it involves credible figures, groups or institutions *internal* to a conflict, who are able to use their influence to play a role – often largely behind the scenes or in undefined capacities – which directly or indirectly influences the trajectory of conflict in a constructive manner. Credibility and influence are central to the concept and practice of internal mediation, the dynamics of which will be explored in greater detail throughout this Guidance Note.

Endeavours by insider mediators may take place in the context of wider international engagements such as formal peace processes, or endeavours that seek to prevent the outbreak of election-related violence, for example; on the other hand, insider mediators can also work outside of the traditional “international realm,” working vertically and horizontally within their own networks at all levels of society to leverage their relationships, knowledge and expertise to bring about constructive change. Insider mediation has not yet been defined in literature related to this field. For the purpose of this document insider mediators are, therefore, defined as follows:

*Individual(s), groups, entities or institutions possessing high levels of legitimacy and trust with the individuals and institutions involved in a specific conflict setting by virtue of their relationships and reputation with the parties and who/which possess a unique ability to directly and indirectly influence the conflict parties' behaviour and thinking.*ⁱⁱ

Categorizing insider mediation

The varying levels of formality – or indeed *informality* - and nature of the position of insider mediators means that they can often play multiple roles simultaneously: messenger, intermediary, conflict analyst, facilitator, mediator, witness, mentor, human rights advocate and ceasefire monitor.ⁱⁱⁱ Moreover, many individuals, networks and organizations playing these roles do not think of themselves as insider mediators, but instead as community leaders, elders, or notables who are responsible for the wellbeing of their communities.

With these caveats in mind, insider mediation can be organized into five categories or types of interventions:

1. Identifying/providing entry-points: When the conflict stakes are still high, individuals or entities with gravitas, relevant authorities, or those with access to particular parties can help use their strategic positions/relationships to find entry-points to a conflict by building faith in a process, and paving the way for official dialogue to begin. Parties, and often sitting governments or officials, may be reluctant to entertain any type of mediation or facilitation, and a well-placed insider may be able to highlight the advantages of such a process, thereby shifting their thinking towards a less confrontational approach. In this context, an entry-point is the starting point of a conversation that may eventually lead to a more fully-fledged/formal dialogue or mediation.

2. Building consensus/solving problems: Once dialogue has begun, insider mediators can use their role as trusted figures to help bridge differences, and seek “win-win” solutions or approaches amongst different groups of stakeholders on specific issues that may be serving as stumbling blocks. In some instances, a wider agreement may be required around core approaches or principles, and this can then pave the way for the mediation of more specific agreements or actions.

3. Direct mediation: Insider mediators, whether they are individuals, entities or institutions may step into direct mediation roles as a result of their perceived impartiality and legitimacy. These entities may also include specialized governmental or semi-governmental mechanisms established specifically to manage conflicts, such as national or local peace committees and peace secretariats, for example.

4. Advocacy: When peace efforts, elections, political transitions or reforms are underway, insider mediators can connect these national-level processes with the wider public through advocacy roles that aim to shift public discourse towards peace, thereby creating widespread momentum to generate the necessary political will. Without engagement with the wider public, parties may conclude that they gain more political benefits from responding to their more “hard-line” constituencies. Through sustained public commentary for peace and collaboration, credible insiders can catalyse public enthusiasm, and therefore help shift the political calculus.

5. Early warning: Due to the proximity of insider mediators to conflict dynamics at both the national and local levels - combined with their knowledge and understanding of the context - insider mediators are in a pivotal position to be able to play early warning roles. Consequently, insider mediators can react to deteriorating conflict dynamics and pay particular attention to potential conflict triggers, allowing them to work with the necessary stakeholders to prevent escalation. A well-placed insider may be able to detect worsening relationships or attitudes among parties, and attempt to discreetly broker a compromise, or de-escalate tensions, before violence erupts.



INTERNATIONAL ACTORS ARE INCREASINGLY TURNING TO MEDIATION AS THE PREFERRED TOOL FOR ENABLING NATIONAL ACTORS TO ADDRESS CONFLICTS, INCLUDING OVER CONTESTED REFORMS, ELECTIONS, AND DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES



DIALOGUE EXTENDS THE REACH AND IMPACT OF A FORMAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS BY BROADENING PARTICIPATION

The roles played by insider mediators can also be categorized as: “mediation,” “dialogue,” and “facilitation;” more details about how insider mediators play these roles is provided below:

- **Facilitation** helps to build trust, confidence, and possibly convergence on a range of contested issues amongst a group of actors. It helps create the enabling environment for more formal processes of transition or peacemaking. Participants in a process of facilitation see themselves as setting the objectives, agenda, and methods for the conversation. Facilitation is often discreet and behind-the-scenes, with limited public communications and outreach. It can take place in any setting where two or more parties feel secure having a conversation, including informal gatherings. The facilitator primarily monitors and gently guides the conversation; his/her presence enhances the perception of “security” and can help ensure the conversation remains constructive. The development of entry-points constitutes a classical facilitation role.
- **Dialogue** helps to foster relationships and build an inclusive consensus amongst a wide group of actors. Dialogue extends the reach and impact of a formal conflict resolution process by broadening participation. Similar to facilitation, participants see themselves as setting the objectives, agenda, and methods for the conversation. However, contrary to more informal facilitation roles, dialogues - especially national dialogues - have visible public profiles, and require a communication strategy, even though specific proceedings may be conducted in private. Dialogues also require more formal and carefully constructed “spaces” that provide a high-level of comfort and security to a large group of participants. The dialogue facilitator has a visible public role as a “process specialist;” s/he helps the parties to: design the process, provide advice on models for dialogue; and then facilitates the *modus operandi* of the process. Depending on the way the process has been designed, the dialogue facilitator may also play a more direct role in shaping and proposing participation in the process. The dialogue facilitator seeks to build consensus through iterative conversations among the entire group, or initially within sub-groups. Dialogues can happen either as a discreet event aimed at addressing a particular set of issues, or may take the form of standing forums where different issues can be discussed over the period of a transition.
- **Mediation** helps to resolve specific issues or conflicts among a limited number of parties, and not a larger group. It often constitutes the core method for reaching agreement in the context of a formal conflict resolution process. The mediator establishes the agenda and methods in consultation with the parties. Much like dialogues, mediation has a visible public purpose and profile, and requires a communication strategy; however, actual proceedings are conducted “off camera.” The mediator needs to construct formal spaces where participants can be systematically oriented towards compromise or peaceful alternatives to violence; consequently, the mediator is in charge of the format and design of the process, and can table options for the parties to consider as necessary. The mediator plays a defined and prominent role vis-à-vis the parties in defining participation in the process. In terms of methodology, the mediator first elicits the positions of each party separately, and then brings them together face-to-face for a structured negotiation. Mediation is of limited duration, and lasts until a particular conflict has ended, or a specific issue has been addressed. “Direct mediation,” and the resolution of specific conflicts or tensions in response to early warning serve as examples of mediation.



Examples

OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF INSIDER MEDIATION PROCESSES

- The **Concerned Citizens for Peace**, a group of eminent Kenyans, helped identify entry-points for mediation following post-election violence in 2008. Specifically, insiders engaged the leaders of the parties to the conflict informally to advocate for a mediated solution, and to take steps to de-escalate violence among their supporters. They used their direct influence, personal networks, and public personas to make a public case for peace, and to also privately shape the political calculus of the parties with regard to the possibilities of mediation. Their efforts contributed to the parties' acceptance of a regional mediation process, and helped put hostilities on hold while the mediation was conducted.
- The **Lebanese National Dialogue**, supported through the Beirut-based Common Space Initiative, has played a significant role in consensus-building and problem-solving as and when challenges arise. The dialogue platform is now accepted as a standing, integral part of the complex system of Government in Lebanon, wherein recurring political disputes can be mediated with the support of the members of the platform, who are respected intermediaries. The platform is used most frequently when consensus over the policies or the composition of the Government fragments; the "safe space" and the facilitators provided by the platform are then used to constitute the new Government or a new programme. The platform has also provided the space for building consensus around highly contested issues such as decentralization.
- The **National Mediator's Office in Chad** is tasked with directly mediating recurring disputes and conflicts at both national and local levels. The platform works with associations of local mediators that have now been established in two of the most turbulent regions in the country. Over the past two years, and with EU and UN support, the associations - whose members conduct the actual mediation - have successfully mediated local conflicts over land and natural resources. The national office has provided capacity development and resources for these efforts.
- The 2012 **national elections in Uganda** saw a significantly lower level of violence than previous polls; a key factor was the advocacy conducted by the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda, which included obtaining pledges against the use of violence from all presidential candidates. Members of the Council include the heads of all the major denominations in the country, who used their convening power to bring together presidential candidates to publicly pledge for peace, and to conduct advocacy through their congregations and faith-based networks.
- The **Uwiano Platform**, a joint initiative of the Government and civic groups in Kenya, used local monitors to identify and provide early warning on emerging hotspots through an SMS messaging system and local networks of monitors. The platform then supported the resolution of these tensions through local peace committees and other mediators during the country's constitutional referendum in 2010 and national elections in 2013. Both exercises were peaceful, in contrast to the violence of 2008.
- **Women** have increasingly played key roles as insider mediators. The "Senior Facilitators' Group," a group of high-level intermediaries on political and social disputes in Nepal, includes two prominent women civic leaders (out of a total of six) as members. Women led the formation and implementation of an "early-warning-and-response" centre during national elections in Senegal in 2012, when the country faced its first-ever prospects of election-related violence. The polls were eventually peaceful. The Roundtable on Peace and Development in Fiji, conducted between 2010 and 2013, also saw prominent roles played by women leaders in building agreement between civic leaders and their antagonists in the military-backed interim Government. Among the key results was a relaxation of emergency regulations that had constrained public gatherings and freedoms of speech.



THE IMPETUS FOR DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE MODELS FOR ADDRESSING TURBULENCE AND CONFLICT ORIGINATES FROM THE REALIZATION THAT SHORT-TERM INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTIONS ALONE ARE NOT SUFFICIENT

Articulating the full significance of insider mediation roles

As well as these relatively well-contained roles, insider mediators also initiate and organize wider dialogue and debates at different levels of society. Insider mediators play an important role in ensuring that political, economic, social and cultural complexities are taken into consideration when designing suitable formats for dialogue; usually complimentary formats are required simultaneously. For example, while political leaders are engaged in roundtable discussions, civil society organizations, which include the voices of credible insider mediators, can engage in mass public forums for popular education, thereby highlighting key issues, and proposing solutions via radio talk shows, social media and more creative engagements such as short films and theatre.

Using insider mediators in this way helps ensure that sectors of society whose voices would otherwise not have been heard are included in a peace process. In societies with high illiteracy rates this is particularly important as rural and illiterate communities, which are vulnerable to radical ideologies, often perceive their ideas and concerns as being excluded from the mainstream conversation. The cumulative effect of these additional conversations contributes, therefore, to the lessening of tensions between communities. One of the most important functions of this broader dialogue is for people to be heard, and this alone can “bring down the temperature” in conflicted situations. Insider mediators have a vital role to play in this regard.

A complimentary and versatile approach

This Guidance Note recognizes that insider mediation efforts do not take place in isolation or in a vacuum, and are often accompanied or complemented by external mediation processes. Even in situations where insider mediators are the only instrument for the peaceful resolution of conflict, such efforts may require gentle initial support and accompaniment by outsiders; this is especially true of situations where credible national capacities may be absent or eroded because of high levels of polarization or conflict. However, the objective of all international support should be to ensure that national and local capacities for insider mediation become self-sustaining and autonomous, and are not permanently dependent on external assistance.

1.2 WHY IS INSIDER MEDIATION INCREASINGLY USED?

Background

The nature and causes of conflict have undergone a profound transformation over the past two decades. The risk of major interstate clashes, especially those of high-intensity, has receded; the world has not experienced one full-scale war involving major powers since 1945, wars of national liberation have decreased significantly since the 1950s and both proxy wars and wars of decolonization – which were so common during the Cold War – have become almost non-existent. However, internal conflicts can still be exacerbated through interference from neighbouring countries, as the conflicts in Syria, Ukraine, and Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo demonstrate.

Despite these trends, conflict has continued albeit in different forms: interventions undertaken in the context of the war on “terror,” insurgencies, coups and social unrest as epitomized by the “Arab Spring” uprisings, as well as conflicts over natural resources unfold with destructive and often deadly consequences. It is within this framework that we have witnessed an increase in the practice of – as well as an increased interest in – insider mediation.

The evolving landscape of conflict and mediation

The impetus for developing alternative models for addressing turbulence and conflict originates from the realization that short-term international interventions alone are not sufficient to address complex and interdependent conflicts or the continual change affecting societies. These types of situations cannot be addressed by a single process or framework, but require, instead, a broader systematic solution predicated on sustainable mechanisms within a particular community or country. The complexity of these conflicts and change processes also requires a broader range of expertise and relationships that cannot be addressed through a single intervention; such conflicts are often diffuse, impacting society by producing political crises at the national level and inter-community tensions at the grassroots level.^v This necessitates sustained engagement at multiple levels and locations simultaneously within a community or a nation in the form of both preventive as well as post-conflict peacebuilding initiatives.^{vi}

There are some changes within the landscape of conflict and conflict resolution in particular which have created a greater demand for insider mediation and insider mediators. Some of these changes, along with the impact they have had through the lens of insider mediation, are analysed below:

a. Increase in decentralized and recurring violence: While the average number of high-intensity conflicts per year^{vii} has dropped by 50% between 1980 and 2000, violence due to criminal activity, local conflicts over land and natural resources, and organized inter-ethnic or communal violence has grown significantly. According to the 2011 Global Burden of Armed Violence Report, 526,000 people die violently every year, more than three-quarters as a result of decentralized violence - including local criminality, gangs, and transnational criminal networks centred on illicit trafficking. The World Development Report of 2011 estimates the annual costs of this violence at approximately USD\$ 100 billion. Mediation forms an important part of the multi-dimensional strategies required to address these challenges: at the political level, mediation enables diverse actors to unite behind a common strategy to address common challenges; and, at the community-level, mediation enhances local cohesion and empowers communities to secure their own livelihood and public spaces.

b. Increase in conflicts over land and natural resources: Conflicts between governments, communities, and corporations over the distribution of costs and benefits related to oil, gas and mining, or over land that was appropriated for, or adversely affected by these industries, have increased in number as countries have become more effective in exploiting resources. Recurring conflicts over land and natural resources, which are increasingly linked to wider social conflict and popular movements, warrant the need for reliable and readily available mediation capacities within a society on an on-going basis. While businesses and international actors have made concerted efforts to lead more responsible engagements in fragile and conflict-affected countries, more can be done at local levels to ensure on-going operations are conflict sensitive. Insider mediators can play a vital role in ensuring that conflicts between businesses and communities are resolved transparently and without violence.

c. Increase in popular protests: In at least ten countries, citizens' groups and others have taken to the streets in large-scale popular protests, or taken up arms against governments perceived as being illegitimate since 2010. While the majority of these have been in the Middle East and North Africa, Governments in Cote d'Ivoire, Kyrgyzstan, and Niger were also ousted from within their own countries as a result of popular uprisings; similarly, organized citizenry played a crucial role in the transition to democracy in Guinea in 2011-2012. Prolonged transitions, such as those still underway across the Arab world, and arguably to some degree in the former Soviet bloc, led to periods of turbulent governance, deadlocks in decision-making, and instances of increased polarization. Insider mediation capacities may therefore be required not just for specific conflicts in these situations, but also to facilitate consensus around new reforms and priorities, and to do so rapidly, effectively, and inclusively.

d. Increase in conflicts related to elections: The past decade has seen a significant uptick in election-related disputes. In the past five years alone, elections have prompted violence, or potentially violent tensions and prolonged periods of deadlock, in at least fifteen countries. Elections provide a well-recognized means to peacefully elect representatives, distribute political power and enable transitions between governments in a manner that expresses the will of the people; as such, they are highly politicized events that tend to reflect, rather than provide a break from, pre-existing tensions and cleavages. These kinds of issues are not suited to one-off mediation processes, and therefore require longer-term insider mediation capacity. In addition, official electoral dispute management processes, which focus on legal compliance, are not suitable for such disputes/conflicts. Therefore, insider mediation provides a critical complement to official electoral dispute resolution processes by addressing wider cleavages and minimizing their impact on the peaceful conduct of elections. Where electoral management processes are not accompanied by such mechanisms, the result is often violence, as seen in Kenya in 2008.

e. The rise in use of technology for organizing protests and confrontation: Internet and social media offer not only the growing possibility of inclusion and empowerment, but also allow festering grievances to coalesce rapidly into wider divisions around perceived fault-lines and identities. From growing religious radicalization in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Asia to the variations of the "Occupy" movement, technology allows challenges to existing order to grow rapidly. Equally flexible local mediation



GOVERNMENTS ARE INCREASINGLY INTERESTED IN BUILDING EARLY-WARNING-AND-RESPONSE CAPABILITIES THAT PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO PREVENT CONFLICT, AND RESPOND QUICKLY, THEREBY PREVENTING COSTLY ESCALATION

capacity is therefore required to address growing barriers and mistrust, address perceptions of exclusion, and create the necessary dialogue between established centres of power and those coming together to challenge them.

f. Increased awareness of early-warning-and-response: As causes of conflict and conflict-related phenomena burgeon, many systems of government are overwhelmed. Governments are increasingly interested in building early-warning-and-response capabilities that provide opportunities to prevent conflict, and respond quickly, thereby preventing costly escalation. Many governments, however, have limited expertise in this area, often designing responses that do not match the “warning,” or which are limited to security actions that further inflame the conflict. Effective responses require strong capabilities for mediation and dialogue to establish new conversations amongst protagonists or between State actors and the conflicted parties; early-warning-and-response systems are likely to be stunted without these capacities.



Examples

OF THE CHANGING CONTEXT AND ITS IMPACT ON INSIDER MEDIATION

- Through the REDES programme (Reconciliation and Development programme)^{viii} first launched in 2005 with UNDP assistance, **Colombia** has supported efforts to build community-level conflict management capacities and advance social cohesion at the local level. Coupled with national efforts towards land reform, this has led to a drop in decentralized violence. Local mediators have been instrumental in resolving recurring conflicts over land, and also in mediating security arrangements between local units of armed groups and the communities affected by their activities.
- Over the past five years, **Peru** and **Bolivia**, with support from the EU and the UN, are among the Andean countries that have invested significantly in building community capacities to address conflicts over land and natural resources; these efforts have focused on establishing local platforms for dialogue, and on enhancing the ability of local leaders to negotiate with government and the private sector. While the long-term impact of these measures remains to be seen, an increase in levels of local violence has been stalled for now. In particular, conflicts precipitated by the use of land for mining have declined.
- The comparative experiences of **Tunisia** and **Egypt**, the first “Arab Spring” countries, illustrate the significance of capacities for insider mediation during periods of transition wrought by popular upsurges and revolutions. In Tunisia, the roles played by both the UGTT, the country’s largest trade union, and the private sector, in serving as intermediaries have been especially important. Founded in 1948, the UGTT has used its presence in all sector of Tunisian society to leverage a role as a mediator in the transition, and to orient political discourse away from conflict and towards accommodation. Specifically, the UGTT was able to mediate between the Islamist Ennahda and its more secular opponents. Conversely, and lacking intermediaries of such stature or competence, Egypt did not witness any mediation between the Morsi Government and its opponents to address the very significant divergences between them. Failure to find common ground then led to the Government being forced from power, and to the violence that claimed hundreds of lives.
- In 2012, insider mediators, with joint assistance from UNDP and DPA, played a crucial role in **Lesotho**; they helped ensure peaceful national polls and the first ever transition from one elected Government to another. The Christian Council of Lesotho mediated the agreement among political parties in 2011 that made this result possible. The agreement addressed significant differences over electoral reforms, and created sufficient confidence in the conduct of the polls. The Christian Council provided a safe space for dialogue among the parties, served as a facilitator, and brought in technical experts in a timely manner to advise the parties on the best approaches, and to clarify specific matters as and when they emerged.
- Following post-election violence in 2008, **Kenya** strengthened its approach to early-warning-and-response to include a significant level of community-level trust-building, dialogue, and mediation processes. Coupled with governance reform, this led to a measurable reduction in local-level violence prior to the 2010 constitutional referendum and the 2013 national elections. Local peace committees were significantly strengthened, especially with regards to their convening and mediation functions, and were able to rapidly identify emerging areas of tension, and to mediate between conflicted groups to de-escalate the potential for violence.

1.3 WHAT ARE THE KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF INSIDER MEDIATORS?

Background

Unlike international mediators who are typically brought into a conflict context from another national government, or from regional, sub-regional or international organizations, insider mediators have long-standing relationships with individuals and communities in conflict. This sustained engagement with a particular country or community ascribes insider mediators with a unique set of relationships and insights. It is two qualities, however, that define insider mediators: legitimacy and influence.

The concept of *legitimacy* relates to the reputation and standing of the insider mediator – whether an individual, group or institution – and is an essential component of the power of the insider mediator. Legitimacy is also tied intimately to the *influence* of insider mediators; influence is dictated by the range, nature and quality of relationships insider mediators hold with key stakeholders such as political figures, local leaders, armed or opposition groups, civil society representatives, religious leaders, or advocacy groups. Consequently, reputation and relationships are the primary assets of insider mediators. This is a particularly important consideration when analysing the effect of external support on the perceptions that different stakeholders have of insider mediators.



THE KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF INSIDER MEDIATORS^{IX}

Profile:

- Originate from the country or region in conflict, or are perceived to be insiders by virtue of their longstanding association with a particular group or community;
- Possess longstanding relationships with the individuals, communities or groups involved;
- Have a stake in the outcome of the conflict as members of the society or community affected by the situation, which increases the perception of their legitimacy;
- Skills and abilities are usually innate, not based on formal conflict resolution training;
- Possess in-depth knowledge of the conflict - its actors, their interests, relationships and orientation – as a result of their long-term engagement with the parties and issues at stake; and,
- Possess the capacity to be unbiased and to speak the truth to each side.

Qualities:

- Trusted and accepted by the parties in conflict by virtue of their reputation and status within a society or community (e.g. affiliation to a religious organization);
- Capable of influencing the parties because of their social status or personal rapport with the individuals and groups involved in the situation;
- Authority is granted by the parties in accordance with specific cultural and social norms;
- Strive for long-term solutions, including the development of domestic infrastructures for peace to address future conflict; and,
- Listener, accommodating, willing to seek joint solutions.

A typology of insider mediators

Insider mediators can be grouped into two broad categories: first, individuals or groups of individuals; and, second, institutions - civic or governmental - with varying degrees of formality.

Individuals:

a. Individuals with access or gravitas: Respected individuals, former political or rebel group leaders, members of the top echelons of the private sector or civil society, elders, or heads of religious organizations may enjoy significant access or influence with political leaders, and help shape their thinking towards more peaceful and constructive options, or concerning particular ideas on which consensus is required.

b. Individuals mandated to play specific roles: Individuals may be mandated by their respective organizations or sectors, or by parties to a conflict, to serve as intermediaries to build confidence, reduce mistrust, test ideas, or prepare the basis for a wider dialogue or negotiation.

c. Individuals or groups serving as professional mediators: Professionals working with courts or the legal system - adjudicating or mediating between business and labour or other sectors - may be called upon, or offer their services, to mediate specific disputes or provide assistance with conflicts at the political level.

d. "Outsider insiders:" Insider mediators need not be citizens of a country. Individuals from a region, staff (especially resident staff) from international development partners, and researchers or analysts from external institutions have also played roles that might be considered typically a role for an "insider." The hallmarks of effective "insider" roles when they are performed by "outsiders" include: first, their parameters reflect completely the ownership, political will and volition of the concerned parties at the national and local levels; second, the individuals playing the roles have the trust and confidence of the concerned parties (in other words they are seen as "insiders"); and, thirdly, that the "identities" of the roles are not highlighted publicly as an external intervention, but are viewed entirely as national efforts by the concerned parties and their constituencies.

Institutions:

e. Civic organizations: Mass membership civic organizations such as unions, chambers of commerce, and religious or cultural associations, as well as advocacy groups (especially those working on issues related to women, youth, or marginalized groups), may have the ability to convene the relevant actors, depending on the situation or the issue. This type of convening is often undertaken through forums, "dialogue spaces," "facilitators' groups", or other mechanisms formed by civic actors to play these roles.

f. Institutions of government: Parliamentary committees, ombudsmen, specific ministries and other government institutions can play significant consensus-building and mediation roles, especially when they have been given a mediation-oriented mandate.

g. Specialized institutions: Several countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Timor-Leste, and Zimbabwe, have established specialized institutions at the national or local levels to manage conflicts, facilitate dialogue, and lead reconciliation and recovery efforts. These institutions, many of which arose from the success of the initial efforts of insider mediators, vary in capacity and mandate. Some convene high-level political leaders, whereas others may only manage conflicts within the parameters set by the government of the day.



THE CONCEPT OF LEGITIMACY RELATES TO THE REPUTATION AND STANDING OF THE INSIDER MEDIATOR - WHETHER AN INDIVIDUAL, GROUP OR INSTITUTION - AND IS AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF THE POWER OF THE INSIDER MEDIATOR



Examples

OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF INSIDER MEDIATORS

Individuals:

- In 2012, the Ugandan National Elders' Forum, comprised of respected, retired individuals with gravitas headed by a former Supreme Court justice, played a crucial role in de-escalating violent protests over rising food and fuel prices in **Uganda**; the forum used a combination of informal diplomacy, conversations with senior political leaders, and advocacy to resolve rising tensions.
- Between 2003 and 2004, the leading political parties in **Guyana** mandated senior leaders to play a specific role; they were requested to undertake a process of "constructive engagement" to resolve a long-standing political deadlock. The emerging agreement eventually helped pave the way for the country's first ever violence-free polls in 2006.
- In the course of political turmoil in Egypt in 2013, for example, the North **Egypt** Chamber for Dispute Resolution served as professional mediators, helping to maintain peace at the local level in parts of the country by providing mediation and accompaniment to contending groups of demonstrators and protestors. The loss of life from this turmoil would have been significantly larger without this role.

Institutions:

- **Tunisia's** largest labour union, the UGTT, convened a series of dialogues from 2011 to 2014 that led to the adoption of a new constitution for Tunisia despite two political assassinations and repeated street protests. To do so, it formed a "national dialogue platform" comprised of civic organizations, primarily including: the employers' union; the bar association; and, the Tunisian Human Rights League. Respected individuals from these organizations were trained in mediation and facilitation and then provided these services.
- In 2013, the National Consultative Forum (NCF) of **Uganda**, an autonomous constitutional, specialized institution that includes all registered political parties in its membership, was formed to promote inter-party dialogue. The NCF was able to obtain consensus at the technical level on an inter-party code of conduct, and on a package of electoral reforms, both of which are highly contentious issues. High-level consensus is still being negotiated. The chair and the co-chair of the Forum, who are from the ruling and the opposition parties respectively, played a crucial role as insider mediators, convening the dialogue sessions and facilitating consensus.

In all of these examples, "outsider insiders" played crucial initial roles in supporting the work of "insiders," but also set the stage for full leadership by the latter instead of substituting for their roles. For example,

- A former UN Peace and Development Advisor advised the UGTT and other stakeholders in Tunisia, and also assisted with developing capacity the mediators;
- An international staff member and an insider mediator from another country in the region (both with good relations with the NCF chair and its secretariat) supported the initial work of the Forum in Uganda, as well as that of the National Elders' Forum.
- The constructive engagement process in Guyana initially benefited from the intermediary roles of two staff of a resident international organization, one of them being a Guyanese and a senior governance analyst with strong relations to all parties. More widely, groups such as Interpeace, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Conciliation Resources, the Community of Sant'Egidio, the Conflict Management Initiative, and the Common Space Initiative have developed a portfolio of "outsider-insider" support in a range of countries.
- Women also played key roles in each of the instances referred to above. The Tunisia Human Rights League included active and prominent women's rights advocates who helped build consensus around the relevant elements of the Tunisian constitution. The memberships of the NCF and the National Elders' Forum in Uganda also include women leaders. Red Thread and other prominent women's organizations and leaders played crucial roles in opening the space for "constructive engagement" in Guyana.

1.4 HOW DO INSIDER MEDIATORS UNDERTAKE THEIR WORK?

Insider mediators employ a number of strategies in their work. Broadly, these strategies can be classified into four categories, which are not exclusive and may overlap. In many situations, insider mediators may use a mix of the below strategies:

- a. Efforts to build trust and confidence among key stakeholders, including the carrying of messages, intermediary roles, and increasing actors' knowledge of each other's motives and objectives;
- b. Accompaniment, wherein an insider mediator may build a relationship of trust or mentorship with a crucial leader so as to shape his or her thinking in an appropriate direction, or serve as a witness to an on-going process of dialogue or negotiation so as to guarantee its integrity;
- c. Facilitation of dialogic processes, such as: multi-stakeholder dialogues; envisioning exercises; public consultations; or, advocacy initiatives involving multiple actors. The purpose of these exercises is to build consensus around particular approaches which can then guide subsequent actions by the participants; and,
- d. Mediation to address specific problems, tensions or conflicts, including through formal negotiations, sovereign "national conferences," or "national dialogues" that are part of agreed-upon peace processes; the results from these activities are often binding on the parties, or made so through subsequent legislation or decisions from statutory bodies. Insider mediation can also be undertaken internally within such processes, when there are blockages or deadlocks around specific issues.



**CARRYING OF
MESSAGES,
INTERMEDIARY
ROLES, AND
INCREASING ACTORS'
KNOWLEDGE OF EACH
OTHER'S MOTIVES
AND OBJECTIVES**



Examples

OF TECHNIQUES USED BY INSIDER MEDIATORS

- **Intermediary roles:** The informally-assembled “senior facilitators’ group” is comprised of senior mediators and facilitators who have played crucial roles in resolving multiple political crises in Nepal since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Nepal in 2006. The Group, supported by UNDP, use informal conversations and intermediary roles as the primary means to build confidence towards new political agreements. In the highly polarized political environment of Nepal, and where mutual trust among political parties is lacking, public political dialogue to resolve tensions and deadlocks is practically impossible. The informal conversations and carrying of messages - the core of an “intermediary” role - therefore becomes crucial to sustaining peace.
- **Accompaniment:** During regionally-mediated negotiations to end Kenya’s political crisis in 2008, the Concerned Citizens for Peace, a platform of eminent citizens and civic groups played a key role in ensuring wider public confidence in both the process as well as its results. They did this by “accompanying” the mediators of the formal process as well as the negotiating parties. As and when they had the opportunity, they used their own experiences as well as the inputs obtained from public consultations to shape the parties’ thinking on crucial issues, and to advise the mediation team. They physically located themselves at the venue of the negotiations, Hotel Serena in Nairobi, for the duration of the process, and were thus easily accessible to the parties.
- **Facilitation:** South Africa’s national peace accord and constitutional agreement in 1994 was preceded by a series of “envisioning” and scenario-building exercises. These exercises, facilitated primarily by independent South African facilitators identified by the private sector, helped build a wider national consensus that subsequently underpinned the new constitution.
- **Mediation:** The role of Ghana’s National Peace Council in addressing challenges to the electoral process and results during national elections in 2012 - and in obtaining the commitment by all sides to take the matter to courts rather than address it in the streets - constitutes an important, recent example of mediation in a situation of crisis. The agreement facilitated by The Council was subsequently ratified by the National Election Commission.

PART 2:

SUPPORTING INSIDER MEDIATORS

The second part of this Guidance Note focuses on why, when and how external parties can support insider mediators. It also provides a step-by-step guide to designing effective support for insider mediators and insider mediation processes, including: undertaking a conflict and situation analysis; identifying and analysing potential levels of engagements; identifying insider mediators; co-developing an engagement strategy; and developing infrastructures for peace. This section concludes with advice on how to support infrastructures for peace.

2.1 WHY, WHEN AND HOW CAN EXTERNAL PARTIES SUPPORT INSIDER MEDIATORS?

Overview

Insider mediation often takes place without external support; depending on the circumstances, insider mediators may play roles either below the radar or very much in the limelight, independently of external actors. However, there are instances when the support of external actors can prove to be instrumental or simply beneficial, whether in the form of knowledge-building, skills-building, or even acting as a sounding board for strategies and approaches being used by insider mediators, for example. Furthermore, insider mediators themselves believe that receiving peer-to-peer support from those with relevant experience in other countries can also prove to be beneficial.

The objective of supporting insider mediators is to provide tailored assistance where required or requested, and in a manner that enables insider mediators to acquire the necessary knowledge and/or skills. Ideally, insider mediators should also be supported in ways that enable them to pass knowledge and skills onto other national actors.

Situations where insider mediators/processes may benefit from external support

External support for insider mediation, provided in a manner that preserves national ownership and capacities, may be helpful or become necessary under the following circumstances:

a. Limited political will: Significant numbers of insider mediators may be present in a country, but the political will or awareness to use them to build policy consensus or resolve high-level conflicts may be low or non-existent.

Outsiders have used their own informal contacts and influence to persuade key actors to accept the role of insider mediators, or to persuade potential intermediaries to play these roles despite political or personal risks. Perhaps one of the most effective strategies for supporting insider mediation has been that of promoting “South-South cooperation.” Countries have explored options for insider mediation when provided with best practices and experiences from other countries in circumstances similar to their own. Of particular value in this regard has been “experience-sharing” among civic and political leaders and government functionaries.

b. Limited capacity: Conversely, a country may possess high-level intermediaries with significant influence, gravitas and political will, but without the specific technical or non-technical capacities for mediation or facilitation.

In many situations, sustained funding, logistical support, or technical resources such as comparative best practices or training might not be systematically available, as these types of capacities are normally not budgeted for in national or external aid budgets. Outsiders can be effective in helping to mobilize and channel such support, in particular from development partners.

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INSIDER MEDIATION OFTEN TAKES PLACE WITHOUT EXTERNAL SUPPORT; DEPENDING ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES, INSIDER MEDIATORS MAY PLAY ROLES EITHER BELOW THE RADAR OR VERY MUCH IN THE LIMELIGHT, INDEPENDENTLY OF EXTERNAL ACTORS



OUTSIDERS, THROUGH THEIR PRESENCE IN, OR ACCOMPANIMENT OF, A PROCESS CAN GUARANTEE THE INTEGRITY OF A DIALOGUE SPACE AND HENCE ITS SAFETY

c. Lack of trusted forums or intermediaries: In highly divided or polarized societies, credible individuals, institutions or platforms may be unwilling to play these roles, or may not be recognized for the mediation of disputes. Even where individuals with skill or integrity are present, they may not be seen as effective intermediaries or mediators because of their identity.

Outsiders with the necessary convening power within a particular national context can provide the initial platform wherein dialogue or mediation processes can be supported with insiders taking on these roles once their credibility has been reinforced. Outsider roles often involve low-key facilitation, wherein independent external facilitators, or resource persons from international development partners, have provided initial facilitation without compromising national ownership until a credible facilitation has emerged domestically, or a particularly polarizing moment has passed. This role has been particularly important in the initial formation or “capacitation” of national forums or processes. While this role skirts the boundaries of external mediation, the key issue here is that of strong local ownership over the entire process.

d. Lack of safe spaces: In some situations, skilled mediators or intermediaries with the requisite convening power or gravitas might be present, but they may lack platforms or spaces wherein they can be assembled or organized to provide a critical mass of support. Furthermore, the State or other actors might try to co-opt this space even when it is created. Even where mediators or facilitators can organize themselves, “safe spaces” for the facilitation of dialogue or to conduct mediation might be absent.

Outsiders, through their presence in, or accompaniment of, a process can guarantee the integrity of a dialogue space and hence its safety. Accompaniment also means ensuring that advice or technical support is available on a flexible basis to insiders or intermediaries as they conduct their efforts, and according to evolving needs and circumstances. This role can also be described as that of “technical dialogue,” or a provision of learning and technical expertise in a “dialogic” manner over a period of time through a series of conversations, as opposed to a one-time or sporadic training.

e. Lack of critical mass or momentum: In some situations, insiders may have the ability to mobilize public opinion in favour of peaceful solutions, but relatively little access to or impact on the exercise of political power. Conversely, back channel negotiations or discussions may need to be kept from the public eye, in order to ensure the confidence of the participants, but may not lead to sustainable results if the wider public is also not mobilized. There may also be little vertical integration between insider mediation efforts at the local and national levels, leading to a continuation of conflict at one level - even if peace is made at another - or to an erosion of peace at one level as a result of instability at the other.

Outsiders can support insiders with the development of strategies and systematic approaches required to bring different initiatives and processes together, so that the local and national levels of peacemaking can move in concert. Relevant training, initial material assistance, and resource mobilization have been especially critical for the work of normally under-resourced actors such as local peace committees, civic networks, elders’ councils, and grassroots advocacy groups.



Examples

OF TYPES OF SUPPORT PROVIDED TO INSIDER MEDIATORS BY EXTERNAL ENTITIES

- **Generating political will through experience-sharing:** An experience-sharing exercise on “national infrastructures for peace,” convened by UNDP in Kenya in 2010, enabled national delegations from Tanzania, Togo and Uganda to develop peace initiatives for their own countries. Delegations, which included members of both government and civil society, were provided support in identifying and launching joint efforts towards dialogue and insider mediation. Uganda convened its own national consultation later that year on developing an infrastructure for peace. The consultation provided an impetus for the subsequent work of the National Elders’ Forum (mentioned previously in this Guidance Note), and for the advocacy and intermediary roles played by the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda prior to the 2011 national elections. These roles, including facilitating a public pledge against violence by all presidential candidates, helped reduce levels of political violence.
- **Mobilizing resources and capacities for insider mediators:** During the course of its mediation to end political deadlock in Lesotho in 2011, the Lesotho Council of Churches received significant assistance to develop the mediation capacities of its members, and was able to utilize a “safe space” at the UN House in Maseru for its meetings. The mediation effort received financial and logistical support from the UN, and drew upon the technical expertise of the resident UN Peace and Development Advisor, and on the informal diplomacy of the UN Resident Coordinator to open spaces for the role of the Council with the key political actors.
- **Initial facilitation:** With the implementation of the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement deadlocked due to negative competition among political parties, UNDP facilitated a consultation among senior political leaders in Nepal in 2009 with the objective of developing a national programme on collaborative leadership. The multi-party National Steering Committee on Collaborative Leadership was formed in the immediate aftermath of the consultation, as was the “senior facilitators’ group” mentioned earlier in the Guidance Note. Both entities have played significant roles in fostering initiatives to reduce potentially violent tensions at both national and local levels, with a cadre of facilitators and mediators - trained under their auspices - increasingly undertaking the requisite mediation and facilitation.
- **Accompaniment:** The roles played by the multi-donor International Contact Group, and by the UN-World Bank Facility for Support for Transition Capacities (FASTRAC), in supporting the talks between the Government of the Philippines and the MILF rebel group (which are nationally led and formally facilitated by Malaysia), are an example of accompaniment. The talks led to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Manila in April 2014. The International Contact Group accompanied the formal talks in Malaysia, and provided observation that ensured the integrity of the process. FASTRAC developed technical “non-papers” on issues where the parties diverged, with the primary objective of reducing the capacity gap between the MILF and the Government. Papers were discussed with both sides, however, and introduced substantive ideas into the negotiation that helped bridge gaps.
- **Maintaining momentum over the longer-term:** In Timor-Leste between 2010 and 2013, UN and bilateral partners provided assistance to help train local level mediators - primarily women and youth. These local level mediators were then deployed to help resolve land-related conflicts precipitated by the return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees. The mediation process assisted nearly 13,000 families to return to their communities. Subsequently, international assistance was provided to the Ministry of Social Solidarity to establish a Department of Peacebuilding, where these mediators now form part of the country’s standing capacity to address such challenges.

2.2 STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO DESIGNING EFFECTIVE SUPPORT FOR INSIDER MEDIATORS AND INSIDER MEDIATION PROCESSES



IDENTIFYING AND ENGAGING INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS THAT SERVE AS INSIDER MEDIATORS IS ITSELF A PEACEBUILDING INTERVENTION

Overview

The below steps are designed to provide a guiding framework for UN and EU practitioners to be able to design effective strategies for supporting insider mediators and insider mediation processes to achieve their objectives. It is important to bear in mind that insider mediators take the lead, and the role of the external practitioner is solely supportive and certainly “behind the scenes.” It is, therefore, important for the practitioner to be especially aware of the impact of his/her presence on relationship dynamics, being especially careful not to threaten or negatively impact fragile processes and individuals who may be in risky positions. Additionally, it is important to avoid politicizing a situation by bringing international attention to it, thereby undermining the very people and processes outsiders should be seeking to support.

The five steps – elaborated in detail below – are designed to help obviate the risks associated with supporting insider mediators. The emphasis throughout these steps is on *inclusivity, national participation and local ownership*. As such, national stakeholders should be included in steps one, two and three, and steps four and five should be undertaken jointly with identified stakeholders, including but not limited to those identified as insider mediators.

- Step One: Undertake a conflict and situation analysis;
- Step Two: Identify and analyse potential levels of engagements;
- Step Three: Identify insider mediators;
- Step Four: Co-develop an engagement strategy; and,
- Step Five: Develop infrastructures for peace (I4P).

2.2.1. Step One: Undertake a conflict and situation analysis

The primary purpose of this stage of the engagement is to design the vision and objectives of the support. The design must take into account the political realities and constraints faced by insider mediators. The more polarized or tense the situation, the fewer the entry-points for the intervention. This highlights one of the paradoxes of insider mediation support: the situations that would benefit most from support to insider mediation are usually the most difficult in which to do so.

Identifying and engaging individuals, organizations and institutions that serve as insider mediators is itself a peacebuilding intervention. As a consequence, the extent and thoroughness of the mapping exercise used to identify the individuals and networks has significant impact on the success of external support. If undertaken too quickly or without sufficient cultural awareness, this process can undermine the legitimacy of insider mediation, as well as the domestic and international efforts to support them.

Undertaking the conflict and situation analysis

- **Nature of analysis:** One of the primary purposes of the analysis is to document the existing insider mediation systems, traditions, organizations or individuals already playing this role. In most societies, there are individuals, civic organizations, or religious entities that are known to serve as playing roles similar to those of insider mediators. Beyond these obvious actors, however, lesser-known individuals, traditions, cultural institutions or grassroots organizations are often more directly engaged in insider mediation. This type of analysis is also important for ensuring that western concepts of power do not obscure non-western approaches to peacebuilding or insider mediation. For example, in Mauritania, a detailed analysis of how conflict was addressed throughout society identified 70 distinct traditional systems or networks that functioned as local I4Ps.
- **Inclusion/participation of national stakeholders:** Analysis should be anchored by credible national counterparts, and key stakeholders should participate from the outset in this process - to the extent that it is politically appropriate and feasible. The process of joint conflict analysis can be a significant learning experience, and open the minds of all stakeholders to new possibilities, including negotiated solutions to deadlock and conflict. The Institute of Bangsamoro Studies based in Cotabato in the Philippines, which brings together respected Moro researchers, lawyers, and professionals, has played an important role, for example, in developing the analysis that has guided external support for the nationally-led peace process.

- **Gender analysis:** Mediation, whether external or “insider,” can significantly impact power relations in a society, including when the process provides new entry-points or opportunities for empowerment. Peace processes and national dialogues all afford opportunities for greater participation by women in leadership and peacebuilding roles, as well as the possibility of generating new types of consensus on gender roles and responsibilities. Both sets of possibilities should be explored in the initial analysis, with an emphasis on the transformation of relevant roles, behaviours, and attitudes, bearing in mind the particular cultural and social context of a society.

For example, in February 2014, UNDP, in partnership with DPA, assisted members of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in Malawi, a high-level grouping that brings together all the major religious denominations and that has the ability to convene political leadership. UNDP assisted Committee members to conduct an analysis of the risks of political violence during and after national elections in May 2014, and of the opportunities for insider mediation. Given that the religious denominations in Malawi do not ordain women into clergy, the members of PAC are all men. However, the analysis revealed that women played significant second-tier roles in churches and mosques, and could be mobilized to support conflict resolution and advocacy processes. These roles could complement the higher-level roles of the PAC membership and, in the longer-term, the roles played by women could lead to a greater receptivity towards their leadership in the peacebuilding arena. In partnership with UN Women, relevant women were identified in May 2014, and trained as mediators, with two senior figures joining the 6-member core, high-level, PAC mediation team. Subsequently, when a political crisis emerged in the immediate aftermath of national elections towards the end of May, the mediation team, and especially the two women mediators, played a very successful role. The tensions were eased after a week and the new president sworn in.

2.2.2 Step Two: Identify and analyse potential “levels” of engagement

In contrast to international mediation, which focuses predominantly on high-level negotiations that include top-level leaders, insider mediation engages (often simultaneously) multiple levels of society to address crises and on-going tensions.⁸ Drawing upon John-Paul Lederach’s schematic, three levels of insider mediators can be distinguished: community-based leaders, middle-level influencers and high-level leaders. These levels are often complementary and overlap significantly in terms of both actors and activities. Furthermore, not all levels will be present simultaneously in all situations, and in some countries, one level may emerge from the other.

Identifying and analysing potential levels of engagement

Some details for each level are provided below:

Level 1: Community-based engagement

- **Actors:** Local leaders (formal and informal); local government officials; elders; women’s networks; indigenous groups; community-based groups;
- **Activities:** Community dialogues; local peace committees; conflict resolution training and early-warning-and-response; strengthening grassroots organizations and networks; identifying and empowering under-represented voices;
- **Important considerations:** The informal influence of particular groups must be taken into consideration. Too often, Western perspectives on power, which centre on decision-making within formal political structures, omit influential groups and individuals that operate in different spheres or with other types of influence. As a consequence, insider mediation can take on many different roles beyond the more traditional understandings of external mediation.
- **Key dynamics:** In contrast to high-level interventions, increased formalization or institutionalization of an initiative at the community-level often increases its legitimacy with community leaders. While the latter often prefer to draw upon their traditional knowledge or customary relationships with their constituencies to address issues in a flexible manner, institutions such as local peace committees, which have emerged organically from the needs and demands of the communities themselves, provide legitimacy to their efforts. The impartial and supportive engagement of the State with local processes enhances their effectiveness and credibility. Conversely, manipulation of local dispute resolution structures by the State, as occurred in Somalia and Darfur, can undermine the very bedrock of communities, and also destabilize the State.

- **Gender considerations:** Local-level mediation initiatives, and the attendant structures, often reflect prevalent attitudes towards gender roles and responsibilities. However, given the day-to-day influence of women in their communities, it also provides the maximum opportunity for transformational change.

For example, Kenya's 2008 peace agreement strengthened and formalized the role of local peace committees in identifying and addressing emerging tensions. Many of these structures emerged from local concerns and initiatives, but were able to draw upon State resources following the agreement. The support provided by the State, especially through independent commissions such as the National Cohesion and Integration Commission, was non-partisan and fair, and strengthened the capacities of local leadership. During the constitutional referendum of 2010, for example, local mediators identified and responded to up to 200 potential flashpoints that could have generated violence. The work of the local peace committees also provided an opportunity for the Mandeleo na Wanawake Organization - Kenya's largest women's network - to contribute to local peacemaking initiatives through their relations with committee members, or through membership in the committees themselves. The Organization identified roles that women could play, especially in the area of trauma healing and advocacy for peace, and systematically teamed up with local peace committees to implement these roles.

Level 2: Middle-level engagement

- **Actors:** Civil Society leaders (NGOs, women's networks, business); traditional leaders (ethnic or religious groups); academics or public intellectuals; mid-level political leadership;
- **Activities:** Preliminary consensus and confidence-building as a prelude to higher-level negotiations; conflict resolution training and early-warning-and-response; advocacy; select intermediary roles;
- **Important considerations:** Mid-level interventions involve individuals who are not formally part of official structures, but are able to substantially influence officials. The informal nature of this level of interaction also allows initiatives to be undertaken with less politicization.
- **Key dynamics:** Interventions at this level, like community-based interventions, are long-term in nature, striving to establish or strengthen sustainable peace infrastructures. Initiatives usually involve partnerships with government departments (e.g. peace secretariats) or national institutions (e.g. universities). Engagement with the media (e.g. TV, radio, and social media) is also an important entry-point for middle-level activities. Capacity-building at the mid-level often involves training and coalition-building amongst the wider group of stakeholders involved in that particular conflict issue. This encourages interaction and relationship-building across lines of conflict. Because of the less formal nature of these processes, capacity-building is often done more explicitly (e.g. conflict resolution training or the development of a community of practice). Middle-level initiatives are also effective bridges linking top-level individuals or processes to grassroots communities or initiatives.
- **Gender considerations:** Professional associations can make important contributions at this middle-level. Where women already play leadership roles in business, law, or other professions, they can have a significant impact on the direction of mediation or peacemaking efforts. As with the community-level, there is potential at the middle-level to transform prevailing attitudes and behaviours in a more progressive direction.

The efforts by the UGTT-led civic platform in Tunisia, already referred to earlier in this Guidance Note, to build capacities for mediation that were then applied to both national-level conflicts and to local-level disputes, is an example of action at the middle level. Women's groups were particularly active in ensuring that national dialogue around the constitution, facilitated by the civic platform, yielded a consensus on the empowerment of women.

During the post-election crisis in Kenya 2008, insider mediators convened the Open Forum, which brought together civil society to reflect on and analyse local dimensions of violence. The outcome of these proceedings constituted the basis of the "Citizens Agenda for Peace," which was then further reflected in the text of the agreement mediated by Kofi Annan. The agenda included a significant element on the protection and empowerment of women, and on advancing their roles in the prevention of local-level violence, as well as around advocacy for peace.



**IN EVERY SOCIETY
THERE ARE
INDIVIDUALS WHO
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AMONGST GROUPS
AND SECTORS**

Similarly, in Togo 2012, a civic forum focused on “democratic elections for all African countries” created a space where issues of transparency, elections and conflicts could be presented in an uncontroversial way. Women’s groups were active at all stages of this process.

Level 3: High-level engagement

- **Actors:** Leaders with decision-making authority, whether political, military or religious; senior leaderships of the civic and private sectors;
- **Activities:** Support high-level negotiations in the context of peace processes or crisis negotiations; broaden the dialogue with other groups in society, including through national dialogue; monitor negotiations and ceasefires; advocate for involvement of minorities and marginalized groups; advising international mediators on negotiating dynamics and background analysis on specific actors and issues. Other forms of support include linking Track I negotiations with national discussions;
- **Important considerations:** High-level interventions usually involve informal processes with the leaders of political parties, military, armed groups or other organizations with political decision-making power. By virtue of the high-profile nature of these interactions, leaders are often restricted to public positions on substantive issues. Insider mediators often play a critical role as intermediaries or “back channels” to facilitate informal conversations and interactions when formal processes have become blocked or non-existent. In contrast to insider mediation at the community-level, the informal nature of these interactions is a feature of their success.
- **Key dynamics:** One of the key challenges of working at this level is the resistance that parties often have to dialogue, given the competitive nature of political discourse. Successful initiatives usually allow parties to collaborate in a manner that does not undermine natural political competition, and which also allows parties to strengthen their overall political advantage. Another challenge for programming at this level is the rapidity with which governments or ministers change. This highlights one of the key challenges in insider mediation, i.e. the degree to which processes should be institutionalized or formalized.
- **Gender considerations:** “High politics” often proves less permeable to gender considerations and to women’s roles in peacemaking than at local or middle levels. Since most high-level political leaders and decision-makers tend to be men, people who have access to them also often tend to be men. However, even in the most traditional societies, these trends are changing: for example, Durga Sob, one of the most senior women activists for marginalized groups in Nepal, is now a member of the “senior facilitators’ group;” the Chair of the African Union’s Panel of the Wise is a woman (Ms. Chinery Hesse); Shamima Ali of the Fiji Women’s Rights Movement has been a significant player in the Roundtable on Peace and Development, and a key intermediary with senior government leaders; and, the National Peace Council in Ghana has also included women members.

The role of the National Elders’ Forum in Uganda, already mentioned earlier in this Guidance Note, which served as an intermediary between the President and opposition leaders, is an example of high-level insider mediation. Similarly, the work of the Christian Council of Lesotho, which facilitated an inter-party agreement in 2011 that paved the way for a peaceful poll in 2012, was also an example of high-level insider mediation.

2.2.3 Step Three: Identifying insider mediators

In every society there are individuals who are able to bridge divisions at different levels amongst groups and sectors. The profile and characteristics of insider mediators can be found in State, religious, academic, business, and cultural institutions, and in civil society. Their voices are not always heard and they might not always be well-known, but they are often very well integrated into society as a whole, and in the sectors where they find themselves. Whilst they may not identify themselves as insider mediators, they may well see themselves as leaders in their field or simply as concerned citizens committed to the wellbeing of their community and country. Making the connection with these potential insider mediators requires thinking ‘outside the box’ and looking in unconventional places.

Potential insider mediators at the community- and middle-levels can be best identified through training programmes that bring together diverse sectors of society to acquire and apply mediation skills. The star performers in these programmes will undoubtedly also perform as credible insider mediators and intermediaries should they be called upon to play these roles. Insider mediators in Tunisia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe have recently been identified through these means.

An equally effective way to identify potential insider mediators may be through analysis. Ideally, analysis should yield information regarding individuals or organizations with access to all actors, and with the ability to convene or facilitate critical conversations. UNDP's CDA analysis tool specifically includes a module concerning how to identify "peace engines", which may prove useful in this regard. The analysis may also identify traditional or modern structures at the local level, from elders' forums to local peace committees, which play credible mediation and facilitation roles. Insider mediators have been identified through this method in Nepal, Mauritania, and Yemen, including with funding and support from the EU and its Delegations on the ground. Analysis may also reveal standing institutions - governmental or non-governmental - with a history or mandate that allows them to play mediation roles. The UGTT in Tunisia and the National Consultative Forum in Uganda are examples of such institutions. In several instances, as in the Philippines and Nepal, "insiders" and "outsiders" might become aware of each other, and the potential complementarity of roles through shared work in the same peace process or around a common issue.

Credible national actors are always the best source for identifying potential insider mediators, especially at the high level. In some instances, bilateral partners as well as UN Resident Coordinators, and the Heads of EU Delegations and other multilateral delegations can also assist with identifying credible insider mediators as they have access to critical information about people and their potential for serving as insider mediators. In many situations of crisis, insider mediators who have access to key decision-makers or specific roles to play will step forward and seek advice or support, or may constitute themselves in ways that enable them to play these roles. The National Elders' Forum in Uganda and the Concerned Citizens for Peace Group that formed in Kenya right after the 2008 post-election violence are examples of such groups. In order to support these individuals or groups, quiet channels should be developed and discreet support offered.

2.2.4 Step Four: Develop an engagement and capacity-building strategy

After entry-points have been identified, and individuals and organizations mapped out, the next step is to develop an engagement and capacity-building strategy. While training is important, it is only one of a variety of different capacity-building methods. Training is often used as an initial entry-point to strengthen the capacity or legitimacy of insider mediators; however, interventions to strengthen insider mediation take on a variety of different forms depending on the level they seek to address – high-level, medium-level, or community-based. For example, training of high-level representatives is usually framed as "experience-sharing" instead of "training."

Alternative conflict resolution skills, such as arbitration, conciliation, mediation and negotiation, are required as a prerequisite for many professions. These are readily available skills that can be used in the socio-political arena, and skills used in legal and other contexts can be used to advance political and social processes in society. With the technical skills already mastered, it requires an adjustment of focus to apply the skills in a different context. Support is needed to facilitate this transition when necessary.

The focus in the domain of capacity development thus far has been to concentrate on skills-building workshops and seminars. Experience has shown that much more needs to be done to embrace the theory as well as the practice of dialogue, facilitation, and mediation. Fieldwork or practice that goes beyond role-play sessions in workshops needs to be incorporated in the overall learning journeys of insider mediators. The forms such practical sessions take depend upon the context and the capabilities of the insider mediator, and should be discussed before the commencement of the training. It is important to make the point here that most insider mediators have regular occupations, and hence no inclination of being full-time mediators. The key input is the quality of technical support that is available for them to draw upon when needed

Insider mediators span the spectrum of society, and the design of the training modules needs to accommodate this. It can be tempting to limit the training of insider mediators to those who have some knowledge and skills in the field of mediation, facilitation and negotiation; while this will make the tasks of training easier, it will also exclude a whole range of possible intermediaries that could potentially play pivotal roles in lessening tensions in communities. There needs to be a balance between short-term results in reaching project targets and long-term sustainability.



TRAINING IS OFTEN USED AS AN INITIAL ENTRY-POINT TO STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITY OR LEGITIMACY OF INSIDER MEDIATORS

Capacity development for insider mediators should include knowledge and skills development in the areas that are detailed below; however, each country will have its own set of priorities concerning the focus of their work, and the possibilities that are open to them due to local cultural and political sensitivities. Addressing the overwhelming need for capacity development requires a pragmatic approach, and there is only so much that can be done at any point in time considering the local contexts and resources available. The following list is not definitive but reflects the work undertaken so far:

- **Deeper knowledge of State institutions:** Insider mediators and intermediaries working with governmental institutions at different levels may require knowledge on issues such as: elections; dialogues; and, strengthening parliamentary processes. Furthermore, they may require skills for conflict management and consensus-building, an improved understanding of the functions of the different institutions, their roles and mandates, their legal obligation to citizens, and how they relate to each other in supporting and deepening participatory governance. This knowledge can help facilitate the creation of conflict resolution mechanisms that can be utilized by these structures to manage future potential conflicts.
- **Promoting social cohesion:** Social cohesion forms part of a broader nation-building agenda, as it looks at the extent to which society as a whole has been able to integrate and work towards coherence, a common vision and national identity. Insider mediators, therefore, need to have some knowledge of issues pertaining to social cohesion, and specifically tensions and conflicts relating to issues of identity, inter-ethnic relations, inter-and-intra-religious tensions, gender violence, reintegration, the role of traditional mechanisms, and the negotiating of tribal spaces (if relevant). The challenge for insider mediators and intermediaries is to better understand how their engagement will help bring about changes in attitude and behaviour that will lead to these issues being addressed in a non-adversarial and collaborative manner.
- **Deepening knowledge of conflict and conflict analysis in all its dimensions:** Identifying all the parties involved and the relationships between them, the sources and the history of the conflict between the parties, and the potential processes whereby they can be brought together is crucial for the work of insider mediators. In this regard, systems and platforms that allow for on-going conflict analysis and sharing of information among current and potential intermediaries and insiders constitute a significant resource.
- **Leadership:** Many insider mediators and intermediaries at different levels in society are part of a “new generation of leaders who understand that they can act as leaders to effect change without necessarily being in traditional leadership positions of power and authority.”³⁴ Others find themselves in leadership positions in organizations and institutions. Leadership training enables them to maximize their influence and impact. There are many leadership training modules available; for example, the “Collaborative Social Change Model” promotes a particular approach to leadership and leadership development. It is a non-hierarchical approach, and centred on the fact that it is not necessary to have traditional forms of authority, such as an elected position, or a title in order to participate in a group’s leadership processes. It emphasizes mutually defined purposes and a commitment to making a difference rather than the pursuit of a position of power. A major assumption is that leadership is ultimately about change, particularly change that benefits others, but also yields meaningful benefits for oneself.
- **Gender and masculinity:** Broadly, international support has emphasized a numerical increase in the numbers of women participating in mediation and peacemaking processes. While this is a useful marker, the overall approach needs to take into account the relational quality of gender and include the issue of masculinity in both analysis and research. Working in culturally and religiously conservative environments has many challenges, including complex gender relations, and it would be advisable to have a more nuanced approach that strengthens gender relations in the context of implementing insider mediation-related activities. Cultural and traditional leaders need to be brought on board with discussions around these areas to ensure that the issue of women’s participation, and the role of women as insider mediators, does not become an obstacle when implementing support for mediation efforts.
- **Transitional justice:** Unresolved issues related to human rights abuses become barriers to building civic trust in state institutions and social cohesion during transition periods. The lack of acknowledgement of past transgressions becomes fertile ground for new conflicts. Due to the inter-generational nature of conflict, how far back should a society go in addressing past injustices? These are difficult conversations to manage, but these unresolved issues have stalled many national dialogues and have to be dealt with.



THE ABILITY TO DEAL WITH DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS AND TO MOVE PROCESSES FORWARD IS CRUCIAL TO BEING EFFECTIVE IN THESE ROLES

Justice-related issues are not only dealt with in judicial courts, they are part of a conversation in traditional councils and public spaces. The tensions between the use of traditional restorative justice methods, reparations and modern criminal justice systems need to be dealt with sensitively. Public processes of “truth telling” and “memory projects” are often contested, and if not dealt with properly can cause rupture in already fragmented societies. Mediating and facilitating these processes in a way that allows space for a national narrative of the past to emerge and that moves groups of people closer is an important step towards reconciliation and healing.

• **Skills in mediation and negotiation:** The focus of support from UNDP and the EU has been to strengthen skills for mediation and negotiation at national and local levels. Training in relation to this has taken place in all the countries that received this support. Implementation is dictated by local country contexts and opportunities to engage a diverse group of people at different levels and in different sectors, but a number of conclusions have emerged from the initial round of trainings:

◦ Insider mediators should have a good grasp of the difference between mediation and negotiation; they should be able to understand the range of different mediation and negotiation techniques and to assess which ones are suited to their political, cultural and social context. The ability to deal with difficult conversations and to move processes forward (including using caucuses) is crucial to being effective in these roles. Skills in these areas should include the facilitation of a variety of dialogues and discussions on different levels from national to the local, and in a variety of contexts.

◦ Knowledge and skills in setting the scene for mediation and negotiation should receive equal attention to the skills of mediation itself. The building of trust in the run up to an actual mediation and negotiation must receive meticulous care; for example, the ability to create a safe space for mediation and negotiation to take place requires in-depth knowledge of the needs and fears of parties involved.

◦ The methodologies used during training are important for contributing to the participants’ development of their critical thinking skills, and also acquiring the capacity to “problem solve.”

◦ The need to develop the emotional intelligence of participants has become increasingly apparent: the ability to connect with a wide range of people is important to the success of insider mediators.

◦ Basic knowledge of “transformative learning” is highly recommended as this facilitates learning - not only at the cognitive level, but also at the emotional and intuitive levels. Conscious attention needs to be given not only to the content that is being imparted, but also to the pedagogy used.

◦ Learning strategies for insider mediators: Acquiring the knowledge and developing the necessary skills for insider mediators and intermediaries necessitates a wide range of formal and informal learning strategies suited to the needs of the group(s). For an overview of learning strategies for insider mediators see the text box entitled, “Overview of learning strategies for insider mediators.”



OVERVIEW OF LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR INSIDER MEDIATORS

- **Training workshops and seminars:** Organizing training workshops are by far the most popular form of capacity development. They offer the possibility of reaching a relatively large number of people at the same time and the possibility of covering a wide range of topics. The workshops themselves also present opportunities to facilitate dialogue and build trust, as people who would normally not share the same space come together to learn from each other and share experiences. The contributions of these exercises should not be underestimated, as stereotypes and prejudice are challenged on these occasions when different groups of people convene. This methodology is most suitable for emerging insider mediators, or those individuals that are being recruited for a specific activity at different levels. For skilled mediators, focused seminars that deepen their knowledge in a specialized area of work i.e. land issues, elections, etc. is more suitable.
- **Practical applications:** Creating training courses that include opportunities for experiential learning is advisable. The art of mediation and facilitation needs a fair amount of practical experience. The practical tasks can be linked to the family, social, and/or community life of the individuals being trained. Tasks can be carried out in schools if teachers, churches, and youth groups are being trained to play insider mediation roles, for example. The theory needs to be grounded in practice as soon as possible to make it real, and to stimulate participants to develop their practical skill sets as needed. This method of building capacity is especially focused on emerging insider mediators, who may need to be exposed to a variety of field experiences to build their level of skills in the required area.
- **Exchange visits:** One important way to strengthen insider mediators is to help them learn from each other. While it is good to network at meetings and events, often the best way to learn from others is to visit them and experience their work as it unfolds. Exchanges are particularly effective tools for fostering learning among state institutions, and horizontal learning amongst civil society organizations. Due to the scope of their work and where they are positioned, staff from development partners such as UNDP and the EU may have insights on how different groups can benefit from exchange visits to increase their knowledge and skills, and should apply these insights. Facilitating “South to South” learning exchanges is also desirable as countries can learn from their counterparts in different countries that may have faced similar challenges.
- **Coaching, mentoring, and relationships:** Coaching and mentoring relationships allow actors to chart their capacity development trajectory, guiding, advising, giving feedback and serving as a sounding board for ideas. Coaches and mentors help facilitate access for intermediaries, skilled insiders and traditional cultural leaders to various opportunities that benefit the development of their capacity; coaches and mentors can also help in negotiating access to institutions. Mentoring relationships can be both formal and informal; the quality of the relationship will play an important role in the transference of skills and knowledge, benefiting all parties involved. A key challenge is finding the right balance between supporting individuals, and simultaneously assisting the institutions of which they may be part.
- **Accompaniment:** The accompaniment of skilled insider mediators during high-level political processes is invaluable for ensuring success: providing technical support and accompanying insider mediators as they progress through a mediation process; advising and reflecting with them on strategies as the process unfolds, and understanding how the process is going for them; and, drawing out the best practices and lessons as they go along are all important elements of such accompaniment.
- **Shadowing:** Skilled insider mediators and emerging mediators can both be deployed to serve as “participant observers” in mediation processes. They can learn from observing high-level mediators at work, and performing small supporting tasks as deemed appropriate by the mediator. These “shadowing” experiences can take place in a country, amongst insiders, or in the context of South-South or North-South experience-sharing processes, and can provide a safe environment for insider mediators to develop their skills under the tutelage of experts.
- **Web-based learning and media:** Skilled and emerging insider mediators should be encouraged to participate in online training courses when possible. In many areas there is inconsistent access to technology and IT resources. When they are available, they should be used optimally to create platforms for learning and sharing. Webinars form a unique opportunity to link insider mediators from different continents in conversation with each other and in the same learning environment. The production of short media tools, such as the documentary “Imam and the Pastor” on the work of two prominent insider mediators in Nigeria help insiders to learn, and also potentially bring communities together through the power of example and inspiration.
- **Gender considerations and learning strategies:** Where international partners have been invited to support insiders with skills and capacity, it is important to enhance the participation of women in mediation and peacemaking, whilst being sensitive to the socio-cultural and political context. Training and capacity development opportunities, in particular, should offer spaces for the inclusion of women. While follow-on support from these exercises should be provided to all participants, women in particular should be recipients of this support, as their enhanced roles may also require an attendant transformation of behaviours and attitudes in their own homes and communities, and they should be accompanied in facilitating this change.



**THE LONG-TERM
SUSTAINABILITY
OF INSIDER
MEDIATION SYSTEMS
REQUIRES SOME
FORMALIZATION OR
INSTITUTIONALIZATION**

2.2.5 Stage Five: Co-building infrastructures for peace (I4P)

The long-term sustainability of insider mediation systems requires some formalization or institutionalization. The way in which these systems become formalized, however, depends on the context. Organizational support is developed, primarily, in two ways: the development of a community of practice or the establishment of organizational structures linked to government institutions. Institutionalized insider mediation, comprised of standing instruments or institutions – formal or informal – for supporting insider mediation roles can be referred to as “infrastructure for peace” or I4P.

The concept of I4P encompasses the long-term and multi-level mechanisms and institutional structures for collaboration between relevant stakeholders (e.g. government, civil society, local agents) in order to resolve violent conflict(s).^{xii}

I4P is a “network of interdependent systems, resources, values and skills held by government, civil society and community institutions that promote dialogue and consultation; prevent conflict and enable peaceful mediation when violence occurs in a society.”^{xiii}

The work of insider mediators themselves often provides the basis for the formation or consolidation of an I4P at the country level. The following are worth noting:

1. **Insider mediators as the core of I4P:** In several instances, insider mediation has been so successful that it has prompted both government and civil society to work together to establish formal national architectures for peace. Ghana’s National Peace Council, and Kenya’s National Steering Committee on Conflict Management and Peacebuilding are good examples of such institutions. In both Kyrgyzstan and Timor-Leste, the success of local level peace committees and mediators prompted national governments to establish formal departments that now provide an institutional basis for insider mediation.
2. **Insider mediators as the facilitators of I4P:** The new Zimbabwean constitution, adopted in 2013, features an autonomous National Peace and Reconciliation Commission. This is a significant development for the country, and convergence around its formation in an otherwise highly polarized society was facilitated by skilled insider mediators. With the support of UNDP and the EU, insider mediators are now facilitating conversations around the design of I4Ps in several countries.
3. **Insider mediators as providing accompaniment to I4Ps:** In several countries that have established formal peace architectures to support on-going peace or peacebuilding processes, insider mediators from communities and civic organizations have been called upon to facilitate conversations or meetings convened by local peace committees or national bodies. The Philippines and Nepal are good examples of this practice, as is Uganda’s National Consultative Forum, which is playing an increasingly significant role as a facilitator of political dialogue.
4. **Insider mediators as part of institutionalized civic space:** Given that formal governmental structures may not have the mandate, legitimacy, or credibility to convene the top political leadership in the country, civic organizations with public gravitas have complemented government institutions and taken on high-level convening and facilitation roles. Such civic organizations have acquired and applied the tools for insider mediation themselves, and provided an institutional base for insider mediators. In some instances, they have provided a starting point for I4P in their own countries. Examples include: the Christian Council of Lesotho; the National Elders’ Forum and the Inter-religious Council in Uganda; and, the Public Affairs Committee in Malawi.



Examples OF INFRASTRUCTURES FOR PEACE (I4P)^{xiv}

- **Peace committees:** Bring together national and local institutions. They focus on reducing violence, promoting dialogue, guiding problem-solving activities, encouraging community-building and reconciliation. They typically capitalize upon the skills of agents of change as mediators to bridge social, political, and economic divides.^{xv} These can be divided into national, regional and local peace committees. Peace committees often include representatives of government, civil society, and political or traditional leaderships, and can be fully or partially integrated into the structures of the State.
- **Peace secretariats:** The objectives of peace secretariats are to assist parties in negotiations by advancing and implementing the peace process. Ulrike Hopp-Nishanka argues that peace secretariats fulfil their roles during peace negotiations by assisting in the creation of more permanent I4P entities. In particular, they coordinate with other institutions, create linkages between “tracks,” and streamline peacebuilding approaches (2012).
- **National peacebuilding forums:** These are multi-stakeholder platforms for consultation and collaboration, based on inclusive and interactive relationships and networks that establish spaces for collective action and systemic engagement.

PART 3:

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE— CRITICAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN SUPPORTING INSIDER MEDIATION

Part Three of the Guidance Note provides an overview of strategies and approaches for supporting insider mediators, including: guidance and tips for designing effective processes; issues and challenges in enabling and strengthening the participation of women in insider mediation processes; good practices for supporting insider mediation; and, guidance on how to build the capacity of external partners to in turn support the work of insider mediators.

Overview

One of the most significant challenges in supporting insider mediators is finding entry-points and bringing (and then keeping) the parties to the conflict engaged in the process. This challenge can be overcome by using some of the below suggested approaches, and tailoring them to suit the needs of the context.

3.1 GUIDANCE AND TIPS FOR DESIGNING EFFECTIVE PROCESSES

Key strategies and approaches for supporting insider mediators and insider mediation processes are highlighted below:

- a. Framing the issue:** Most parties in situations of deadlock, conflict, or potentially violent tensions will not recognize the necessity for mediation, negotiated solutions or even consensus. For many, the continuation of conflict may offer the best approach to maximizing competitive advantage. For such parties, rather than framing the issue as one of peace versus conflict, it may be better to position dialogue as an opportunity to maximize competitive advantage through selective collaboration as opposed to conflict. This approach has proven to be particularly useful when mediating between political leaders.
- b. Emphasizing the positive:** Many governments will not accept that violent conflict, fragility, or deep-seated deadlock may be taking place “on their watch”. Government may fear that these phenomena indicate weakness or failures in governance, and admission of their occurrence could be exploited by the opposition. In such contexts, framing the proposed mediation or facilitation as focused on building consensus around key reforms or development priorities can sometimes allow more room for insider mediation than depicting the challenge as conflict resolution. Notably, for a government conscious of sovereignty, the development of internal mediation capacity and insider mediation will also be a lot more palatable than external intervention.
- c. Encouraging the intermediaries or insiders:** For reasons of significant personal or reputational risk, or even because the asymmetry of power between a government and its counterparts might make mediation appear moot, insiders may be reluctant to take on their roles. Encouraging them to take on these roles may require multiple rounds of conversations, and building of trust, between “outsiders” who are advocating for them on the one hand, the stakeholders who might benefit from the support of insiders on the other, and the insiders themselves.
- d. Locating and approaching the right intermediaries:** Especially in situations where credible intermediaries or platforms are hard to find, parties may find it easier to appreciate the possibility of mediation once this gap has been addressed. Given that no one individual may be considered as being entirely “neutral,” one approach might be to bring together several individuals who are equated with a cross-section of interests or tendencies, but who also have a reputation for integrity and for crossing boundaries in the public interest.

e. Building and leveraging trust: In a deeply polarized environment, high levels of mistrust between the parties and the relevant actors or sectors may keep them all from appreciating the possibilities of mediation, internal or external. Internal intermediaries may not be trusted because of their identities. Quiet trust-building by external actors with all relevant internal counterparts may, therefore, become essential. Such trust-building may not require technical skills or an analytical perspective, but a range of “human” and “life” skills centred on empathy, emotional intelligence, and an ability to appreciate all points of view non-judgmentally.

f. Experience-sharing: Members of governments, senior officials, and high-level political leaders in particular may be more open to the possibilities of mediation, or building mediation capacities, if they are apprised of similar experiences on the part of counterparts in other countries. Experience-sharing can inspire confidence that such approaches can work, and encourage parties to move forward with the approach.

g. Separate engagements: Engagements such as training and experience-sharing, when conducted separately for different parties, may actually be more successful in opening them up to the possibilities of mediation than efforts towards immediate joint exercises. Separate exercises and conversations may allow parties to build up the confidence necessary for joint engagement; this is especially important where there is a significant technical capacity gap between the parties.

h. Where insider mediation capacities may be part of the government: In several instances, insider mediation capacities may be part of a government institution, or a state-led early-warning-and-response system. However, the government in question may be an actor in the conflict, and these capacities may therefore be perceived as partial, or incapable of convening all the necessary parties in a dialogue or a negotiation. In such instances, these capacities should still be supported as they can be effective at the local level, when convening the government and its opponents at the higher political level is not required. Furthermore, support for such State capacities may persuade sceptical governments of the utility of insider mediation and, should there be progress at the local level, convince them of the ways in which this tool can be used to address other internal disputes peacefully.



ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES IN SUPPORTING INSIDER MEDIATORS IS FINDING ENTRY-POINTS AND BRINGING (AND THEN KEEPING) THE PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT ENGAGED IN THE PROCESS



Examples

OF STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES USED FOR CREATING POLITICAL SPACE FOR INSIDER MEDIATION

- “Collaborative leadership” initiatives in **Kenya** and **Nepal** highlighted strategies whereby leaders can compete on behalf of their constituencies while still collaborating in the national interest. This helped open entry-points for insider mediation in a situation where rampant and aggressive political competition created strong scepticism about the utility of sustained dialogue as a means of addressing deadlock and conflict.
- Efforts towards electoral violence prevention in **Guyana** prior to the 2006 polls were undertaken under the rubric of enhancing social cohesion; these efforts focused on emphasizing an increase in a positive value i.e. social cohesion, over and above the potential negative consequences of electoral violence. This made them more palatable to the Government. Similarly, external actors helped insider mediators to reframe electoral violence prevention endeavours as efforts to increase “public trust, confidence, and security” prior to the 2011 polls.
- Prior to the high-level “roundtables on peace and development” that took place in **Fiji** between 2010 and 2012, which lowered political temperatures before the launch of the on-going transition to democracy in 2012, insider mediators were assisted by external partners to explore options for bringing together these dialogues. Crucial conversations were held through informal networks established in informal settings, such as golf clubs and dinners.
- In 2002 the then UN Resident Coordinator in **Zimbabwe** used trust built up with the parties over several years to persuade both the Government and opposition actors to undertake a multi-year programme to build the negotiation and mediation capacities of political and civic actors, and Government institutions. The skills acquired during this process were then subsequently utilized in negotiations on the Global Political Agreement in 2008, and again to reach consensus in 2012 and 2013 on the establishment of an independent National Peace and Reconciliation Commission.
- The Secretaries-General of the two major political parties in **Guyana** established mutual trust at a regional experience-sharing exercise prior to national polls in 2006, and were able to add momentum to on-going (and eventually successful) efforts towards a violence-free poll. Similarly, a regional experience-sharing exercise in Vanuatu in 2008 directly led to accelerated efforts towards national reconciliation in the Solomon Islands; regional experience-sharing also helped efforts towards Dialogue in Fiji and other initiatives to promote multi-stakeholder dialogue, as political and civic leaders were able to engage constructively for an extended period in a safe space for the first time. The role of external actors in both instances was to ensure that domestic actors were able to engage in a regional space on issues that would have been difficult for them to discuss within the boundaries of their own countries, and to therefore build the necessary trust and confidence to make progress.
- The success of **local-level work** has also been used to make space for insider mediation at a higher level. For example, the work of the Concerned Citizens for Peace in Kenya in the aftermath of the elections in Kenya in early 2008 helped reduce levels of violence and also paved the way for the high-level regional mediation. Similarly, the regional and national Government in Ghana were persuaded of the utility of an autonomous national peace architecture with an independent capability to mediate at all political levels as a result of the initial successful work of the Northern Region Peace Advisory Council (NORPAC) in mitigating violent conflict in a highly unstable region.
- **Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs)** deployed by the offices of UN Resident Coordinators have often supported the work of insider mediators. For example, PDAs have provided important capacity development and technical support for the work of insiders in Fiji, Ghana, Guyana, Kenya and Lesotho that has been mentioned at various points in this document.

3.2 ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN ENABLING AND STRENGTHENING THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN INSIDER MEDIATION PROCESSES

In many societies, women play critical informal roles in mediation, and often in social and cultural contexts. Insider mediation often builds on cultural norms and processes, and therefore has great potential to enhance the role of women if the following issues are addressed:

Women are often not the first choice for mediators of political or State-centric processes, and will often not put themselves forward for these roles. Using examples of the roles that women have played elsewhere to bring a greater degree of awareness to potential women insider mediators can help overcome self-imposed barriers.

Lack of security, safety and cultural norms may limit women's mobility. It is at the community level where women's networks and women's committees and groups are often organized and where women are social mobilizers and mediators, are women. External actors can assist by providing safe spaces for women to participate without putting them at risk.

Even from these grassroots vantage points, women can play critical roles that are complimentary to more formal peace processes. Local instruments for peacemaking such as peace committees and civic forums in particular have benefited from the participation of women. Where women have engaged in higher-level mediation roles, they have often first started work and been noticed by their peers at the sub-national level, thus opening the space for them to then work at the national level. Teresita Deles, the Presidential Advisor to the Peace Process in the Philippines, the late Dekha Ibrahim from Kenya, and Shadia Marhaban, the former negotiator for the GAM rebel group in Aceh, are examples of women who are internationally renowned as mediators and peacebuilders, yet started their work as community organizers and local-level peacemakers.

Networking opportunities often tend to be fewer for women, and hence resources with which to acquire and play mediation and formal peacebuilding roles are limited. N-Peace—the UNDP-supported network for women's peacebuilding in Asia members of which have served as mediators and facilitators in Mindanao, Aceh, Timor-Leste, and other areas affected by violence in several parts of Asia—is a good example. Networks of this nature should also be supported in other regions.

In the context of EU-UNDP support for insider mediation, in-country staff have attempted to address these gaps by ensuring that at least a third of all beneficiaries of training and other capacity-building exercises are women. Women have also been accompanied in playing specific roles to convene and facilitate dialogue, especially in Nepal, through this initiative.

3.3 LOOKING AHEAD: GOOD PRACTICES FOR SUPPORTING INSIDER MEDIATION PROCESSES

The emerging practice of insider mediation is still, compared to more conventional external mediation, in its early stages. Political sensitivities make it more difficult to support insider mediators to connect across borders and to share experiences and ideas. Nevertheless, with assistance from external partners, a number of good practices have been identified that are generally applicable to both the work of insiders, as well as those seeking to assist them:

1. **Flexibility:** Insider mediators strive to identify and develop dialogue spaces in conflict environments characterized by limited or strained interactions between conflicting parties. While entry-points can appear unexpectedly, creating them usually requires substantial preparation. Moreover, recognizing when to capitalize on these opportunities requires flexibility and political acumen. For example, convening parties at the wrong moment can further damage relationships and exacerbate conflict. As a consequence, it is often necessary to delay activities (such as joint training sessions) when the political climate is not conducive to dialogue. In these contentious environments, practitioners often advise to “go slow to go fast”, or “do not rush to failure”, when discussing the patience required by insider mediators. Unfortunately, programmatic



EXTERNAL ACTORS CAN ASSIST BY PROVIDING SAFE SPACES FOR WOMEN TO PARTICIPATE WITHOUT PUTTING THEM AT RISK



INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT INSIDER MEDIATION DO NOT TAKE PLACE IN A SOCIO-POLITICAL VACUUM. ANY INTERVENTION WILL ADVANCE THE PROSPECTS OF SOME INDIVIDUALS AND SYSTEMS OVER OTHERS

timelines and delivery concerns often constrain these considerations; on-going violence can also necessitate more speedy action to save lives.

2. **Relationships:** Insider mediation prioritizes the relationships that insider mediators have with the parties. Regular dialogue with the parties in conflict, or their intermediaries, strengthens trust and provides a deeper understanding of the parties' interests. It also allows insider mediators to informally (and often subtly) gauge the reaction of parties to possible initiatives, or to elicit ideas from the parties themselves on the ways forward. Informal shuttle diplomacy enables insider mediators to test solutions with the parties in a way that obscures the source of the proposal. This prevents, for example, a party from rejecting an idea solely because their rival proposed it. Insider mediators use these regular interactions to identify and develop common ground while facilitating consensus within the different sides, waiting for the right moment to bring the parties together.

3. **Do no harm:** Interventions to support insider mediation do not take place in a socio-political vacuum. Any intervention will advance the prospects of some individuals and systems over others. This can, in turn, displace or undermine existing insider mediators or systems, whether formal or informal. In order to evaluate the impact of an intervention, it is necessary to conduct a detailed analysis of existing cultural, political and social systems. Unfortunately, this analysis is often conducted under constrained timelines, or by individuals with incomplete knowledge of the country in question. As a result, the analysis is often biased, privileging dynamics in the capital or the perspective of elites, and may pay less attention to the diversity of socio-cultural practices and institutions throughout a country. This concern can be addressed in at least two ways: firstly, by engaging analysts with detailed understanding of a country; and, secondly, by drawing upon the expertise of insider mediators or other national actors familiar with existing systems and the risks posed by an intervention.

4. **Sustainability:** An important consideration is the degree to which external support might alter traditional cultural practices or existing capacities that have been sustained for generations. Moreover, if new insider mediation systems are being established, are these systems contingent solely upon external financing? Does this introduce or strengthen a culture of dependency on international aid? As with any capacity-building intervention, best practice suggests supporting pre-existing communities of practice or other indigenous systems with technical support (as opposed to financial aid alone) in order to minimize negative externalities.

5. **Transparency:** The acceptability of an insider mediator to the parties in conflict is often predicated on his or her perceived neutrality or independence. As a consequence, external support to insider mediators by external partners can undermine or politicize the very actors that such programmes are striving to assist. In order to address concerns of politicization, the support offered to insider mediators and/or the parties in conflict should be undertaken transparently, and is perhaps best provided by coalitions of partners or through an impartial international entity so that it is not perceived as serving a particular bilateral agenda.

6. **Institutionalization:** Insider mediators' effectiveness is often contingent on the informal nature of their interaction with the parties in conflict. On the other hand, strengthening the institutional framework supporting insider mediation can, in some cases, increase its legitimacy and effectiveness. Striking the right balance between these two competing concerns is necessary to establish an I4P that is appropriate to a particular community or society.

7. **Government support:** Interlinked with the consideration of institutionalization is the extent to which the government, whether at the national, provincial or community level, is engaged with insider mediation processes. The literature on I4P emphasizes the importance of government support for developing sustainable peacebuilding systems. For example, at the community-level, government support may increase the legitimacy and authority of insider mediation processes. On the other hand, at higher-levels in society the government, or the political parties running it, may themselves be parties to a situation of conflict or deadlock. "Government support" in these situations can politicize a process or undermine its perceived neutrality. As a consequence, the nature and extent of government involvement needs to be continually re-evaluated in order to find sustainable solutions.

8. **Supporting traditional institutions:** While many traditional systems may be the only form of conflict resolution mechanism in a community, formalizing them carries with it the risk of entrenching social or gender inequalities. However, it is often critical to engage with them to prevent fostering opposition to insider mediation initiatives. One strategy has been to “modernize” aspects of the tradition by, for example, integrating human rights or gender considerations into the proceedings. In Burundi, the traditional institution for addressing conflict at the community level – *Bashingantahe* – was undermined by colonial rule and the civil war in the 1990s.^{xvi} As part of the post-accord peacebuilding plan, the tradition was re-established. An integral aspect of this process was the provision of human rights and gender equality training to the individuals selected to participate in this process. Conversely, as part of the EU-UNDP support to insider mediation in Yemen, community elders were asked to nominate candidates who would participate in insider mediation training. This selection method conferred community legitimacy to the candidates while also ensuring that the insider mediation group included women and youth. The process for selection of candidates was designed based on a detailed conflict analysis of various governorates in Yemen.

9. **Media and Communications:** In-country offices of international partners need to manage the image of the organization when engaged with complex political issues and actors. While the positive results achieved through insider mediation and I4P need to be publicized - especially in advocacy contexts - behind-the-scenes political work can be damaged through unwarranted or untimely advocacy. Furthermore, skills associated with non-violence and the use of non-adversarial language will be required for both insiders and those working with them. A challenge for both institutions and individuals in this regard is to be able to clearly demarcate their mediation and advocacy roles, as some may also be advocating for or against specific actions or policies of the very parties among whom they are also mediating.

10. **Building on existing systems is more sustainable than trying to create new ones:** Conflict is a complex system that involves reinforcing economic, social and cultural dynamics. Corresponding I4Ps need to be equally sophisticated. Establishing complex national peacebuilding systems from scratch is, however, usually unsuccessful. Building on existing systems and capacities is often more sustainable.

11. **Communities of practice accelerate progress:** The existence of a community of practitioners with members who possess the requisite experience and skills to, for example, conduct training of trainers is invaluable. In countries where individuals or organizations with high-level of skills do not exist, expertise can be drawn upon from the neighbouring region.

12. **Value of conflict analysis:** Mapping existing peacebuilding systems and stakeholders is invaluable for planning support. This step is often undertaken quickly. This approach, however, usually results in “the usual crowd” of persons from certain demographic groups being involved in peacebuilding activities. Taking adequate time to conduct field research on the social and cultural resources available has proven useful, not only for including women but also lesser-known individuals and grassroots organizations.

13. **Empowering voices operating in the “middle:”** As tensions increase in conflict settings public discourse becomes polarized, forcing individuals and organizations to choose “sides.” As a consequence, the middle ground often comes under attack as individuals may feel forced to “pick a side.” Yet it is precisely in these moments when the voices of insiders are most critical. Supporting the few actors who can operate in-between the two sides becomes more important (and more challenging) as tensions rise.

14. **Working in teams:** A strength and weakness of insider mediators is their pre-existing relationships with the parties. Few individuals are perceived as being neutral as they are usually associated with one side more than another. As a consequence, insider mediators work in teams that draw upon their different strengths, and balance any perceived biases.

15. **Developing a cadre of international and national staff to accompany insiders:** The pool of international staff with the requisite skill-set, experience and comportment to accompany insider mediators is still relatively small. This is acutely so for Francophone and Arab contexts. It is necessary, consequently, to continue to develop and encourage this community of practice. An under-addressed element of this challenge is the mentoring of national staff in order to sustain interventions.



IMPLEMENTATION OF INSIDER MEDIATION REQUIRES CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION THAT PUSHES THE ENVELOPE OF CONVENTIONAL THINKING

16. **The role and participation of women:** The extent to which women, especially from marginalized and excluded groups, play critical roles as insider mediators varies from country to country, and depends upon the social context. Efforts to support the role of women should be mindful of this context, and work sensitively to ensure that endeavours “do no harm.” However, the experience of support from UNDP and the EU has been that targeted efforts to include women in all training and capacity-building activities have a significant positive impact. Women have used these initial opportunities to expand their roles and participation with due sensitivity, and have often achieved a lot with only gentle subsequent accompaniment. In doing so, they have often emphasized their competencies and aptitude as competent facilitators and mediators rather than the more traditional rights-based advocacy, and have earned the respect of their peers.

3.4 BUILDING THE CAPACITIES OF EXTERNAL PARTNERS TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF INSIDER MEDIATORS

Support for insider mediation entails political risk; it is essential that conflict prevention specialists, especially PDAs and similar staff employed by the UN, the EU and international partners are supported by their managers to provide guidance on developing a coherent strategy that will ensure national ownership. Fundamental to this is the co-creation of the initiative with national stakeholders, and locating the short-term effort within the long-term goals of any transition that the country might be undergoing.

In addition, PDAs and similar staff need political guidance regarding the parameters of the initiative and the availability of resources for implementation. Implementation of insider mediation requires creativity and imagination that pushes the envelope of conventional thinking. Opportunities must be created for country-level staff to share their experiences and reflect with their peers on the challenges and opportunities that they face in their own context. This sharing, in person or on virtual platforms, will make it possible for them to identify areas of co-operation to strengthen and increase the impact of their work.

Many insider mediators find themselves connected to or involved in social movements for social, economic and environmental justice. Building these movements requires patient investment in creating and developing a base of confident and skilled leaders among those individuals most affected by systems of inequality. It also requires investment in forging sustainable and effective organizations that can involve those individuals directly in the process of changing policy and building participation. Levels of civil society organization and activism differ, and can have political implications for perceptions of impartiality of UNDP, and other international partners.

The key points in this Guidance Note, and the steps suggested therein with regard to support for insider mediators, will be translated into an accompanying training manual for UN, EU and other staff. The content of the manual will focus on specific steps for identifying, capacitating, and accompanying insider mediators.

Finally, it is important to note that working with insider mediators requires a different set of skills than those encompassed by day-to-day technical assistance. Two critical skills are necessary in particular: the ability to engage in the complex, and often iterative, conversations with senior national counterparts; and, the ability to “accompany,” i.e. provide a gentle mix of interpersonal dialogue and judiciously timed technical advice to key actors as they conduct insider mediation. The purpose of “accompaniment” is to subtly shape attitudes and behaviours through the application of skills, rather than through the one-time and static delivery of these skills through a training workshop alone.

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Endnotes

ⁱ A new Regulation succeeding the “Instrument for Stability” (IfS), entitled “the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace” (IcSP) was adopted on 11th March 2014. For more details on the EU’s IcSP please consult: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/fpi/what-we-do/instrument_contributing_to_stability_and_peace_en.htm.

ⁱⁱ See Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Improving International Support to Peace Processes Support to Peace Processes: The Missing Piece*, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2012; Wehr, Paul, and John Paul Lederach, ‘Mediating Conflict in Central America,’ *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 28, No.1, pp.85–98 (1991); European Union External Action, *Mediation Support Project Factsheet on Strengthening National Capacities for Mediation and Dialogue: National Dialogue Platforms and Infrastructures for Peace*, 2012.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Mason, Simon, *Insider Mediators: Exploring Their Key Role in Informal Peace Processes*, Berlin: Berghof Foundation, 2009.

^{iv} See Kaye, Josie Lianna, *The Evolution of Conflict and its Implications for Peacemaking, Summary of CICR Experts Retreat*, New York: Center for International Conflict Resolution at Columbia University, 2011.

^v See Jadallah, Alma Abdu,Hadi, ‘Consultancy Report: Informal Consultation on Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in the Arab World: Reflecting on the Developments in the Arab World from the Perspective of Mediators and Facilitators,’ Geneva: PeaceNexus Foundation, 2013.

^{vi} See Lederach, John Paul, ‘The Origins and Evolution of Infrastructures for Peace: A Personal Reflection,’ *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, Vol. 7, No. 3, pp.8-13 (2012).

^{vii} Defined as conflicts that reach 1,000 or more battle deaths in a calendar year.

^{viii} Reconciliación y Desarrollo (REDES) in Spanish.

^{ix} The characteristics of insider mediators are adapted from the writings of John Paul Lederach (see: Lederach, John Paul, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997; Lederach, John Paul, Of Nets, Nails, and Problems: The Folk Language of Conflict Resolution in a Central American Setting. In *Conflict Resolution: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, Kevin Avruch, Peter W. Black and Joseph A. Scimecca, eds. New York, Westport, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press, 1991, pp. 165-186; Lederach, John Paul, ‘Who Mediates in Developing Countries?’ *Conflict Resolution Notes*, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 82-83 (1989)). Also see Mason, Simon, *Insider Mediators: Exploring Their Key Role in Informal Peace Processes*. Berlin: Berghof Foundation, 2009; Hilaire, Peter, Richard Smith, George Wachira, ‘Insider Mediators in Africa: Understanding and enhancing the Contributions of Insider Mediators to the Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts in Africa,’ Geneva: PeaceNexus Foundation, 2011.

^x See Bercovitch, Jacob, ‘International Mediation,’ *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 3-6 (1991).

^{xi} See Higher Education Research Institute, *A social change model of leadership development*, Los Angeles: University of California Los Angeles, Higher Education Research Institute, 1996, pp.12.

^{xii} See Van Tongeren, Paul, ‘Potential Cornerstone of Infrastructures for Peace? How Local Peace Committees can make a Difference,’ *Peacebuilding* Vol. 1, No. 1, pp.39-60 (2013); Lederach, John Paul, ‘The Origins and Evolution of Infrastructures for Peace: A Personal Reflection,’ *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, Vol. 7, No. 3, pp.8-13 (2012).

^{xiii} See United Nations Development Programme, Issue Brief: Infrastructure for Peace, New York: UNDP, 2013

^{xiv} See Unger, Barbara, and Stina Lundström, Katrin Planta, and Beatrix Austin, eds., *Peace Infrastructures: Assessing Concept and Practice*, Berlin: Berghof Foundation (2013); Lederach, John Paul, ‘The Origins and Evolution of Infrastructures for Peace: A Personal Reflection,’ *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, Vol. 7, No. 3, pp.8-13 (2012); Lederach, John Paul, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997.

^{xv} See Van Tongeren, Paul, ‘Potential Cornerstone of Infrastructures for Peace? How Local Peace Committees can make a Difference,’ *Peacebuilding* Vol. 1, No. 1, pp.39-60 (2013).

^{xvi} See Naniwe-Kaburahe, Assumpta, The Institution of Bashingantahe in Burundi. In *Traditional Justice and Reconciliation after Violent Conflict: Learning from African Experiences*, Stockholm: International IDEA, 2008.



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