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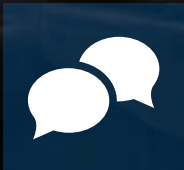
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Supporting Insider Mediation:

STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE TO CONFLICT AND TURBULENCE



GUIDANCE NOTE SUMMARY

United Nations Development Programme

Overview

The concept and practice of 'insider mediation' emerged as part of a recognition that countries at risk of conflict benefit from the skills, knowledge and engagements of key individuals or institutions from the context in question. Peace, after all, requires sustained effort, well before and long after the signing of an 'official' peace agreement. Disagreements over reforms, friction 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, especially those 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.

Recognising the power and potential of empowering insider mediators, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Union (EU) formed a partnership in the context of a two-year programme in 2012-2013 with funding from the EU's 'Instrument for Stability' (IfS) to equip national and local actors in international conflict prevention and resolution processes with the appropriate skills to better support dialogue and negotiation processes. The collaboration has continued through a second phase of the project from 2015 to 2018 with funding from the EU's 'Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace' (successor of the IfS), and expanded to involve the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA).

The project involves activities at the global and regional levels, and seeks to strengthen collaboration between the EU and the UN, including through joint conflict analysis exercises and regional exchanges (in West Africa and the Balkans), as well as country-level activities in nine pilot countries geared towards strengthening 'insider mediation' capacities. This Guidance Note, designed for UNDP and EU staff, but of relevance to all practitioners working in this field, documents and distils best practices on insider mediation accumulated as part of the two-year project and over ten years of experience supporting national counterparts to prevent and resolve violent conflict. This briefing provides an overview of the key tenets of the Guidance Note, organised into three key sections.

PART 1:

UNDERSTANDING INSIDER MEDIATION AND INSIDER MEDIATORS

WHAT IS INSIDER MEDIATION?

Insider mediation is the process of supporting negotiations - as well as a variety of other forms of dialogue - to prevent, manage and resolve conflict at different levels of society. What distinguishes insider mediation from other more traditional, 'Western' forms of mediation is that it involves credible figures, groups or institutions *internal* to a conflict, who are able to use their influence and credibility 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.

Insider mediation can be organized into five categories or types of intervention, including:

- Identifying entry-points to the conflict;
- Building consensus or problem-solving on specific issues that may serve as stumbling blocks;
- Direct mediation roles with a view to preventing, managing or resolving conflict;
- Advocacy roles that aim to shift the public discourse towards peace and create greater momentum; and,
- Early-warning roles in response to conflict triggers and deteriorating conflict dynamics.

WHY IS INSIDER MEDIATION INCREASINGLY USED?

The impetus for developing alternative models for addressing turbulence and conflict originates from the realisation that short-term, international interventions alone are not sufficient to address complex and interdependent conflicts, nor the continual change affecting societies. Indeed, these types of situations cannot be addressed by a single process or framework, but require a broader systematic response 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 by an outside actor; such conflicts are often diffuse, impacting society by producing political crises at the national level and inter-community tensions at the grassroots level. This level of complexity 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.

Six trends in particular have increased the demand for insider mediators, including:

- An increase in decentralised and recurring violence;
- The rise of conflicts over land and natural resources;
- Intensification in number and form of popular protests;
- Augmenting levels of conflicts related to elections;
- The increasing use of technology for organizing protests and confrontation; and,
- Heightened awareness of early-warning and response mechanisms.



THE CONCEPT AND PRACTICE OF 'INSIDER MEDIATION' EMERGED AS PART OF A RECOGNITION THAT COUNTRIES AT RISK OF CONFLICT BENEFIT FROM THE SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND ENGAGEMENTS OF KEY INDIVIDUALS OR INSTITUTIONS FROM THE CONTEXT IN QUESTION

WHAT ARE THE KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF INSIDER MEDIATION?



CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS, INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT AND SPECIALISED INSTITUTIONS CAN ALL PLAY INSIDER MEDIATOR ROLES

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 in particular, 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. Civic organizations, institutions of government and specialised institutions can all play insider mediator roles.

HOW DO INSIDER MEDIATORS UNDERTAKE THEIR WORK?

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

- Efforts designed to build trust and confidence amongst key stakeholders, through increased understanding of their respective motives and objectives;
- Accompaniment strategies designed to help shape the thinking of key leaders, or designed to ensure integrity through assisting specific processes;
- Facilitation of dialogic processes in order to build consensus and understanding around key issues; and,
- Mediation efforts to address specific problems, either through formal negotiations or ‘national dialogues’, or within such processes to address specific blockages.

These strategies may be deployed by insider mediators as part of their work as ‘independents’, or may be implemented as part of more systematised Infrastructures for Peace (I4P), such as commissions, committees, and task forces, for example. Insider mediators may also play dual roles, alternating between their role as an ‘independents’ with strategic relationships with key stakeholders, and as part of key institutions seeking to further peace through formalised structures and processes (see Part Two, Step Five below for more information about I4P).

PART 2:

DESIGNING EFFECTIVE SUPPORT FOR INSIDER MEDIATORS

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

Insider mediation often takes place without external support; depending on the circumstances, insider mediators may play roles either below the radar or in the limelight, independently of external actors. However, there are instances when the support of external actors can prove to be beneficial or even instrumental, whether in the form of knowledge-building, skills-building, or by serving 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 be helpful.

Outsiders can support insider mediators by assisting 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 mobilisation have been especially critical for the work of normally under-resourced I4Ps, such as local peace committees, civic networks, elders' councils, and grassroots advocacy groups. Key situations where insider mediators may benefit from external support include circumstances where there is: limited political will; limited technical or non-technical capacities for mediation or facilitation; a lack of trusted forums or intermediaries; a lack of safe spaces; and/or a lack of critical momentum.

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

The below steps are designed to provide a guiding framework for UN and EU practitioners to design effective strategies to support insider mediators and insider mediation processes. 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 careful not to threaten or negatively impact fragile processes and individuals who may be in risky positions. Additionally, it is important to avoid politicising a situation by unnecessarily bringing international attention to it - thereby undermining the very people and processes outsiders should be seeking to support.

1. Step One: Undertake a conflict and situation analysis:

The purpose of undertaking a conflict and situation analysis is to ensure that the engagement is informed by the contextual dynamics; the extent of the mapping exercise used to identify 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. Analysis should document existing insider mediation systems and include a full and diverse range of individuals, traditions, cultural institutions or grassroots organizations. The analysis process itself should be inclusive and participatory, and must include a gender lens to ensure that the peace process provides an opportunity for greater participation by women in leadership and peacebuilding roles.

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. 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. Not all three levels will necessarily be present simultaneously in all contexts, and in some countries, one level may emerge from the other.



OUTSIDERS CAN SUPPORT INSIDER MEDIATORS BY ASSISTING 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

3. Step Three: Identify 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 within 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. Whilst such individuals or groups may not identify themselves as insider mediators, they may well see themselves as leaders in their field or simply as concerned citizens or entities 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. Suitable insider mediators can be identified through training programmes, through the analysis process outlined above, or as a result of recommendations by in-country partners.

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. The capacity-building strategy should include a mix of 'mediums', including: training workshops and seminars; practical applications/scenario-building; exchange visits; coaching and mentoring; accompaniment; shadowing; web-based learning and media; and, other learning strategies that take gender elements into consideration. Capacity development for insider mediators should include knowledge and skills development in key areas such as, but not limited to:

- Understanding of state institutions;
- Promoting social cohesion;
- Deepening knowledge of conflict and conflict analysis in all its dimensions;
- Leadership;
- Gender and masculinity;
- Transitional justice; and,
- Skills in mediation and negotiation.

5. Step Five: Co-build Infrastructures for Peace (I4P):

The long-term sustainability of insider mediation systems requires some formalisation or institutionalisation. The way in which these systems become formalised, 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. Institutionalised 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. I4P can be defined as "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."¹ Peace committees, peace secretariats, and national peacebuilding forums all serve as examples of I4P.

i See United Nations Development Programme, Issue Brief: Infrastructure for Peace, New York: UNDP, 2013

PART 3:

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE – CRITICAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN SUPPORT OF INSIDER MEDIATION

GUIDANCE AND TIPS FOR DESIGNING EFFECTIVE PROCESSES

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. These challenges can be overcome by paying particular attention to the following key issues:

- **Framing the issue:** Rather than framing the issue as one of peace versus conflict, it can be helpful to position dialogue as an opportunity to maximise competitive advantages through selective collaboration as opposed to conflict. This approach has proven to be particularly useful when mediating between political leaders.
- **Emphasising the positive:** Many governments will not accept that violent conflict, fragility, or deep-seated deadlock may be taking place 'on their watch'. 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.
- **Encouraging intermediaries or insiders:** For reasons of significant personal or reputational risk, for example, 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.
- **Locating and approaching the right intermediaries:** Given that no one individual may be considered as being entirely 'neutral', it can be helpful to bring together several individuals who are equated with a cross-section of interests or tendencies, who also have a reputation for integrity and for promoting the public interest.
- **Building and leveraging trust:** In a deeply polarised environment, high levels of mistrust between the parties and the relevant actors or sectors may prevent them from appreciating the possibilities of mediation. Quiet trust-building by external actors 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 appreciating all points of view non-judgmentally.
- **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 aware 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.
- **Separating 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. Separate exercises allow parties to build up the confidence necessary for joint engagement.

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



INSIDER MEDIATION OFTEN BUILDS ON CULTURAL NORMS AND PROCESSES, AND THEREFORE HAS GREAT POTENTIAL TO ENHANCE THE ROLE WOMEN PLAY IN SOCIETY

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 women play in society. 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 roles that women have played elsewhere to bring a greater degree of awareness to the potential of women insider mediators and can help overcome self-imposed barriers. Similarly, lack of security, safety and cultural norms may limit women's mobility; for example, the prevalence of religious leaders serving as insider mediators often inherently excludes women. External actors can assist, therefore, by providing safe and diverse spaces for women to participate without putting them at physical risk, nor at risk of exclusion.

At the grass-roots level, women play important roles that complement more formal peace processes, so their participation at all levels of society should be actively encouraged. Lastly, because networking opportunities often tend to be fewer for women - and hence the occasions for acquiring and playing mediation and formal peacebuilding roles are limited - international actors can assist by actively targeting women for inclusion in capacity-building exercises, and ensuring their participation by providing safe spaces at culturally appropriate times and locations.

LOOKING AHEAD: GOOD PRACTICES FOR SUPPORTING INSIDER MEDIATION PROCESSES

The emerging practice of insider mediation is - compared to more conventional external mediation - still 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; these include:

- Maintaining a flexible approach to mediation and being ready to change course and seize opportunities as and when necessary;
- Prioritising relationships and taking actions that protect relationships to every extent possible;
- Ensuring 'do no harm' at all times;
- Ensuring insider mediators are supported transparently to avoid fuelling tensions;
- Strengthening institutional frameworks that support on-going efforts to find sustainable peace;
- Seeking government support as and where possible and appropriate/constructive;
- Supporting and, where possible, 'modernising' traditional conflict resolution mechanisms to ensure peace engines are supported in an inclusive manner;
- Ensuring media and communications strategies are carefully considered as part of insider mediator support endeavours;
- Building upon pre-existing institutions and frameworks rather than creating everything 'from scratch';
- Fostering effective communities of practice;
- Ensuring conflict analysis is an integral part of all programmes and strategies;
- Empowering individuals that are able to speak to 'both sides' of a conflict;
- Working in teams to protect against perceptions of partiality;
- Developing a cadre of international and national staff to accompany insiders; and,
- Promoting and supporting the participation of women.

BUILDING THE CAPACITIES OF EXTERNAL PARTNER TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF INSIDER MEDIATORS

Support for insider mediation entails political risk; it is essential that conflict prevention specialists, especially Peace and Development Advisors (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 process is the co-creation of insider mediator initiatives with national stakeholders, combined with the ability to locate short-term efforts within the long-term framework of any transition that the country might be undergoing.

Furthermore, 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.



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

Next Steps

The key points in this summary – and in the Guidance Note – will shortly 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.



Examples OF INSIDER MEDIATORS AND INSIDER MEDIATOR PROCESSES

Selected country examples

- 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 sectors 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 in part due to the lack of intermediaries of such stature, 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.
- Through the REDES Programme (Reconciliation Development Programme), first launched in 2005 with UNDP assistance, **Colombia** has supported efforts to build community-level conflict management capacities and to advance social cohesion at the local level. Coupled with national efforts towards land reform, this has led to a drop in decentralised 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.

Individual insider mediators

- 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 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.

Infrastructure for Peace (I4P)

- 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 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' created, 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 decentralisation.

- The 2012 national elections in Uganda experienced 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 information 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.

Highlighting the role of women

- **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.



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