

CONFLICT SCAN: YEMEN

Promoting Social Cohesion and Conflict Transformation through Insider Mediators

Moudiah District

Abyan Governorate

- 6 - 2016 15

Promoting Social Cohesion and Conflict Transformation through Insider Mediators Project aims to enhance social cohesion among targeted local communities by building the capacities of local activists (mediators) in conflict analysis and performance of mediation roles to resolve conflicts in their districts.

The conflict scan of Moudiah district aims to identify main local-level conflict issues, and then identify conflict drivers and impacts, conflict dynamics, potential solutions, and resources for peace. To achieve this, Insider Mediators (IMs) were trained and equipped with necessary skills, capacities, knowledge, and tools to enable them to conduct scan conflicts at the local level and develop solutions through inclusive processes. The conflict scan process covered the sub-districts of Moudiah district and identified the priority conflicts that could be resolved through local-led interventions.

Every conflict scan has included the implementation of ten community meetings which were structured meetings that aimed to:

- Introduce the project, the implementing organization, and the objective of the scan.
- Select the issues relevant to the scope of the project.
- Discuss selected issues with community members and obtain relevant information from them.
- Highlight possible solutions to resolve these conflicts.
- Identify possible opportunities for peace that could be implemented in the target community.

The community meetings were fruitful and featured active contribution from local community members in the development of potential frameworks for resolving conflict in their villages. Local communities provided immense knowledge in decoding the intricacies and difficulties of some rigid problems that have lasted in the villages for years. The meetings yielded a large number of development-related problems, among others. With the help of IMs, the participants shared contextualized proposals to resolve these conflicts.

The IMs did face some difficulties in their work. For instance, in a rural community dominated by tribal customs and traditions, most participants refused to state the names of conflicting parties, especially the names of the person(s) disrupting the public projects, so as to avoid the possibility of subsequent tribal conflicts between residents.

LOCAL CONTEXT:

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Moudiah District has a tribal nature, governed by tribal customs and traditions to compensate for the absence of an effective state power, especially with regard to the security situation. However, the local authority responded positively to our invitation: The District Director General, Mr. Ali Al-Harbagi, attended a training session and expressed his great pleasure with interventions that would bring development projects to the district and not merely unsustainable training courses. Influential stakeholders and the general community all expressed their willingness to cooperate in projects devoted to addressing local issues of concern.

Lack of security has exacerbated problems around development projects in the district. Crimes such as shutting down schools and blocking roads have gone unstopped by any formal authorities - this included long-standing issues and more recent issues.

Development-related conflicts, particularly conflicts over water, have had a significant impact on the residents, due to the fact that people have to spend huge amounts of money to obtain water.

The scopes of conflicts vary from region to region. Some were within the same tribal borders of an area; others might be over a shared project, but located outside the tribal boundaries of a village. Thus sensitivities and bickering between tribes would appear because of suspension of such projects.

GOAL OF CONFLICT SCAN:

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The main goal of Promoting Social Cohesion and Conflict Transformation through the Insider Mediators Project is the promotion of social cohesion among the locals of the targeted areas by building the capacities of local activists (mediators) in conflict analysis and mediation roles to resolve conflicts in their districts. In addition, the conflict scan aims to identify main local-level conflict issues, and then identify conflict drivers and impacts, conflict dynamics, potential solutions, and resources for peace with an objective to implement interventions that can contribute to promoting social cohesion.

DESCRIPTION OF CONFLICTS:

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Overall situation in Moudiah district: .A

The security situation is unstable in general. In spite of the existence of District Police Department, it plays no effective role at all. The society is generally dominated by tribal and rural customs and traditions. -

The social situation reflects a lot of community and tribal problems, with tribal feuds dramatically widespread. Moudiah marketplace often becomes the scene of crimes such as killings and feudal revenge acts. -

The economic situation is very distressing, in light of rising prices for food and basic necessities. Oil derivatives are extremely scarce and frighteningly expensive: the price of a liter of gasoline or diesel will often be 5 to 6 times its market value. Besides, the lack of water projects creates a significant burden on residents' finances as they have to buy water from water tankers. In some villages of the district, the price for one water tank would unfortunately can reach YR 10,000 per refill. Additionally, the community is rural in nature, and each household is expected to have cattle, so they need huge quantities of water continuously. -

The political situation in the district has not changed. The same members of the local authority have been holding office for years. -

The situation of the public service sector in the district is weak. There are frequent outages of electricity, water and telecommunications, affecting the lives of residents negatively. -

The identified communal conflicts are as follows: .B

The sewage problem in Al-Habil village, Moudiah: The reason for the conflict is .1 that the sewer manholes overflow on others' the property. The issue led to a tensions that almost turned into an armed conflict had it not been for an outside intervention.

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Suspension of the educational process at Moudiah Secondary School for Girls (Moudiah): Parents decided to suspend schooling due to the lack of female teachers; they categorically rejected having their secondary stage daughters taught by male teachers. Some parents even had their daughters drop out. The main causes for such acts were tribal and rural customs and traditions. .2

The sewage problem of Reiman Block (Moudiah Town): The reason for the conflict is sewage overflow, causing tensions between residents of the neighborhood. The sewer sludge made it difficult to move in the neighborhood alleys, among other inconveniences, causing residents to quarrel. .3

The health center problem in Kawkab Village (Moudiah District): The cause of the problem is the non-completion of construction and equipping of the health center. Villagers, therefore, have to go long distances to get medical care for their children and women (especially in the event of childbirth) during emergencies. .4

The problem of water outage in the villages of Al-Maqaser, Jum'aan and Al-Theraa': The problem is caused by the landowners where the project water wells are. They cut off the water to the villages due to claims of unpaid salaries. .5

The sewage problem in Al-Qulaitah Village (Moudiah District): Earlier, the government had agreed to implement a sewage project for the village, and necessary pre-implementation studies (e.g. project study, location, etc.) were conducted. However, the landowner whose property was selected as a sewerage basin for the project refused to give up the land unless he got compensation. .6

The drinking water project in Al-Jiblah Village (Moudiah District): The problem is caused by the landowner whose property the water project grid will pass. He refused to give over his land and demanded that a water well be dug for him in order for him to allow the passage of the water grid. .7

The water well project in Marran village (Heeb Sub-district, Moudiah District): A water well had been dug, and water was found at 35m deep. Unfortunately, the owner of the well requested residents to pay him an amount of money in compensation, but the residents are unable to. Residents are, therefore, deprived of water. .8

The asphalt road to Ju'ar Village and its neighboring villages: This was caused by a person from Thwaireen Village who blocked the construction of the asphalt road (passing through the borders of his tribe) and refused to let the road project continue to Ju'ar Village and neighboring villages. .9

The water grid of Kubran Village (Moudiah District): The project reservoir distributing water to the beneficiaries in the village is small. Additionally, a .10

Conflict Scan of Moudiah district, June 2016

landowner, through whose land the water grid passes, sabotaged the pipeline and threatened to harm any person or entity that would attempt to come to his land.

Identification of various other conflicts and conflict drivers: .C

Other conflicts in the district include suspension of development projects around water services and road construction. The prime causes are attributed to the lack of security, ineffective role of law administration authorities, and the weakness of the State's rule, as well as the frequent tribal squabbles and social problems.

Top priority peace opportunities: .D

The peace prospects for conflict resolution in the district depend on the following: community members need to show significant solidarity in order to resolve conflicts, and need to be aware that conflicts only affect development; volunteers and philanthropists to contribute significantly to resolving such conflicts; presence and assistance from NGOs/CSOs in the district.

Entities that can provide support and assistance in promoting peace opportunities: .E

The main parties that can contribute to conflict resolution in the district include the local authority, NGOs, philanthropists, and social personalities i.e. local elites and informal leaders), in addition to community solidarity. These are classified according to the nature of the conflict, as indicated in the form of SFCG Conflict Scan Tool.

Previous interventions to resolve top priority conflicts; the extent of their effectiveness; and the causes in the event of their failure: .F

Several interventions to resolve conflicts were made by the local authority, social personalities and dignitaries in the region, and some NGOs and CSOs. The failure of earlier interventions was caused mainly by the intransigence of (one of) the conflicting parties, hindering conflict resolution by making difficult demands. Sometimes, interventions succeeded for a while, only to have the same conflicts/ disputes restart.

Conflict No. (1): Closure of Abu Salamah School

This a conflict involving four families: Al Abdullah and Al Abed, on one side, and Al Mashdoq and Al Saeed Mohammed, on the other. The conflict analysis has yielded the following points:

This issue has affected security and social cohesion, as the families involved in the conflict reside close to one another in the same neighborhood. This conflict caused the suspension of studies at school and deprived students of education. The conflict was initially caused by the fact that the school is lacking in classrooms, and the existing classrooms are too narrow to accommodate the large number of students. Each of the conflicting parties refused to have their children taught in the afternoon period.

There are many instances of conflicts leading to closure of schools. In this particular conflict, however, conflicting parties consider it to be in the interest of their children, claiming that all they want is to have their children study in better circumstances.

The involved parties are: the first party, including Al Abdullah and Al Abed; and the second party, comprising Al Mashdoq and Al Saeed Mohammed. The first party seems to have the upper hand, considering that it owns the land on which the school is built.

Unfortunately, people recognize only interventions by local social figures to solve the conflict; however, their efforts failed. People hope for an intervention by government or education-oriented NGO to contribute to solving the problem by building additional classrooms for their children.

Stability of the security situation in the district is badly needed, as it will contribute significantly to resolving the issues and conflicts.

Conflict No. (2): Closure of Moudiah Girls School (Moudiah Town)

A conflict between students' parents and District MoE Office has led to the suspension of study at school. The aspects of the conflict are as follows:

This case has immensely affected the level of education for girls in the town. There is a lack of female teaching staff for secondary schools, and parents will not accept their daughters to be taught by male teachers, considering that a violation of norms in their very tribal and rural community. Suspension of study had happened several times prior, and for a duration of several months. Many parents decided to take their daughters out of secondary school, hence increasing the already high illiteracy rate among girls in the district.

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The parties involved in the repeated school closure and suspension of study include: the first party represented by District MoE Office (for not responding to parents' pleas to provide female teaching staff) and also the District Local Council for failing in their responsibilities, i.e. intervening immediately to compel District MoE Office to provide female staff; and the counterparty, represented by parents refusing to have their secondary school daughters taught by male teachers.

An intervention to resolve the conflict was made by the school principal. He invited some female graduates to volunteer and teach secondary stage girls. Some female graduates agreed; some others refused under the pretext of not receiving salaries. In time, most of the volunteering female teachers quit, causing a deficit of female teachers at school. Parents hope that an NGO would intervene and provide financial stipend for volunteering female teachers in order to motivate them to continue, and also to encourage more female volunteers to come and contribute so as to ensure continuation of the educational process for girls in the district.

Conflict No. (3): Reiman Neighborhood Sewerage

This is a conflict between neighborhood residents and local authorities. The aspects of the conflict are as follows:

This problem has led to a lot quarrels and bickering between the neighborhood residents. The sewage overflow and sludge spread to neighborhood roads and alleys, affecting the neighborhood environment severely and inciting the spread of diseases, especially among children. Sewer overflow would occasionally enter houses. As a result, conflicts started to occur between the neighborhood residents. Generally, the residents blame the local district authority for not providing a new sewerage system that can contribute to the elimination of sewage overflow and protect their children from disease risks.

The parties involved in the conflict include community members, as some of them do not take care of their sewage manholes, leaving them open, as well as overuse of their sewers, thus generating overflow. The other party is the local authority; residents regard it as primarily responsible for the problem because it has not taken measures to solve the issue. Residents wish the local authority to solve the issue by installing a modern sewerage system, particularly as the sewage endpoint has been already prepared in advance and is only waiting for the extension of sewage pipes from the neighborhood into the outlet. Residents also expressed their willingness to provide community contribution in the implementation of a new sewerage system.

Residents had previously initiated an intervention to resolve the problem by establishing a fund for community contribution to help finance the project and

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compensate landowners in exchange for allowing the installation of the sewerage system. They have managed to compensate one landowner only; the residents' financial circumstances cannot cover the huge amounts requested by the remaining landowners.

If the government and local authority adequately performed their duties this problem will be solved, particularly in light of the cooperation offered by a large number of the neighborhood residents.

Conflict No. (4): Kawkab Village Health Center

The health center of Kawkab village is located in a building that comprises classrooms in the old school. One of the villagers (Mr. Al-Khader Mohammed Obadi) - who happens to be owner of the land - asked for the permission of the other residents to allow him to turn two classrooms into a health center. He himself works in the health sector, and his wife is a female gynecologist. Al-Khader started the reconstruction process of the two classrooms at his own expense, but as he had no other source of support (whether from the government or even the community) he was unable to complete the project.

If the health center project is completed, it will provide a valuable service to the villagers, particularly to the women of the village to currently have to travel over 25 km to the nearest clinic, imposing extra hardship and requiring extra money for travel.

There is an intervention by International Rescue Organization (IRO). Their coordinator expressed willingness to provide some equipment and medicines to the center when the restoration process is over and the building is ready to use.

Conflict No. (5): Water outages in the villages of Al-Maqasir, Jum'aan and Al-Theraa'

Water delivery to the villages is being impeded by the landowner, Al Mansour, whose property the water project sits on. The project has been suspended for approximately 10 years. Villagers indicated that the landowners continue to demand salaries for their alleged services to the project. The project suspension causes villagers to spend huge amounts of money to buy water from tankers for themselves and their livestock.

The conflicting parties are: Al Zamik in the villages of Al-Maqasir, Jum'aan and Al-Theraa', and Al Mansour in Al-Qulaitah village.

An intervention to resolve the problem was made by the District and Governorate Local Authority. The project workers and management were called to Abyan Govt. capital Zingibar twice, in 2007 and 2011. The attempt was

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successful for a time, but the project was suspended again as the local authority's solution was not comprehensive or sustainable.

Villagers suggested that one of the water wells in Al-Haql area be allocated to pump water into Meqaideh water reservoir, which was used to deliver water to the villages many years before the establishment of the existing project in Al-Qulaitah. This suggestion requires provision of high-pressure pipelines from one of the project wells to the Meqaideh reservoir. This would greatly help the residents of the three villages - an estimated two thousand inhabitants.

Conflict No. (6): Al-Qulaitah Village sewage

The sewage issue is considered a major problem for the residents of Al-Qulaitah village, which is one of the largest villages in the district. The sewage overflow has caused many problems between the village residents. In 2000, local authorities approved the implementation of sewage project for the village. Unfortunately, the project implementation was suspended because of the lack of compensation to the landowner selected to be the downstream endpoint of the sewers. The landowner demanded YR 1 million as compensation. As the project budget did not have a heading for compensation, and due to the residents' inability to pay the compensation money, the project has been continually postponed. Lately, the project has become neglected by local authorities.

Individual interventions were made by some villagers. Some residents covered the sewage manholes with cement. Also, in 2013, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) provided concrete caps as a temporary solution.

Conflict No. (7): Al-Jiblah Village Drinking Water Project (Moudiah District)

The drinking water project in Al-Jiblah village is vitally important to the region. The landowner through whose property the water grid would pass prevented work progress in 2014, and demanded the drilling of a water well for him in order to allow passage of the water pipeline through his land.

An intervention was made by the district local authority and some local social figures, and they managed to convince the landowner to let the pipeline pass. Shortly after, however, he suspended the project.

Villagers believe that it is necessary to resolve this issue so that residents can have access to water. Some residents have been contemplating a proposal to provide a monthly salary to the landowner until the end of the project, but no final decision has been taken.

Conflict No. (8): Marran water well issue (Heeb Sub-district, Moudiah District)

Village inhabitants struggle to obtain water; as people have large numbers of livestock, they need large quantities of water. There is a water well, but the owner of the well demands compensation.

The problem becomes more complicated when rainwater becomes scarce, especially in the summer.

An intervention was made by Sheikh Ali Mohammed Ahmed and Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah Al-Gelai, who requested the owner of the well to allow people to extract water in exchange for a sum of money that would be given to him as compensation. Unfortunately, the attempt failed because the said amount was not provided.

Villagers believe that if an INGO intervenes to provide a water pump and a grid, this will help in resolving the conflict and villagers will have water. Residents suggested the International Organization for Migration as it has intervened with water-related problems prior.

Conflict No. (9): The asphalt road to Ju'ar Village

This is a conflict between Al Emjarib and Al Emsaidi. In 2007, the government approved the construction of an asphalted road branching out from the International Highway to Ju'ar village, which is located very far distance from the nearest highway. Residents from Thwairin village (Al Emsaidi) - whose land happened to be on the road's path - forced the road contractor to suspend project implementation.

Lack of security throughout the district led to the suspension of many projects. Various people resort to trouble-making and violence in order to impose control over a project, suspending a project simply because it is located in or passes through their land.

Ju'ar residents attempted to intervene. They went to Thwairin village to inquire about the reasons for project suspension. Friendly talks took place, and most Thwairin people agreed to resume the project, except for the landowner. He was adamant about not allowing the road to pass through his land.

Ju'ar villagers hope that a rapid intervention be made by the government or other entities to convince the landowner to allow the asphalt road project to continue.

Conflict No. (10): The issue of Kibran Village drinking water

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Kibran village water project is important to the residents as it could provide drinking water for villagers as well as their livestock. In 2000, the water pipeline was sabotaged by the landowner whose property the pipeline passes through under the pretext that the reservoir was too small to deliver sufficient water to the entire village. He also threatened anyone who would come near the destroyed water grid.

Since the sabotage of the water grid, all villagers have been deprived of water, and spend a lot of money on the purchase of water from tankers.

An intervention was made by the local authority and some social figures to convince the parties concerned to stop the sabotage of the public service but, unfortunately, all attempts failed and the demands of residents went unheard.

The villagers hope that a philanthropist or NGO will fund the construction of a larger reservoir and the re-connection of the grid to the village so that all village residents can benefit from this project.

PROSPECTS OF PEACE:

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The local communities' significant interaction with this process of conflict identification and potential solution design revealed their strong desire to have these conflicts resolved. For example, regarding the prospects of peace in the case of the water well and health center in Kawkab Village (Report No. 4), community members were unanimous about the need to resolve the issue so that villagers can benefit from the water project and the health center. Similarly, the Reiman Block sewage issue (Report No. 3) reflected people's willingness to provide a community contribution to solve the problem by implementing a sewerage system in their neighborhood.

As for the issue of Moudiah Secondary School for Girls (Report No. 2), the best example of the peace prospects in this conflict is represented by the fact that some female teachers volunteered to teach in the high school even without getting any financial returns.

Moreover, the peace opportunities in the issue of Al-Qulaitah village sewage system (Report No. 6) can be observed in the fact that the project study has already been conducted, and the land for the sewers pipe endpoint is available, and only needs a sum of money to compensate the property owner.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

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There is a need to intervene promptly to start resolving existing conflicts through IMs implementation of community dialogues between conflicting parties. .1

There is a need to apply conflict resolution processes to issues affecting social cohesion, impacting on development, and those that do not require large sums of money for intervention. .2

There is a need to form community-based committees at the governorate and district levels to follow up on conflicts and develop quick solutions to address them. .3

It is important to support youth-oriented mini-projects in order to contribute to youth unemployment alleviation and mitigate youth polarization and recruitment by extremist groups. .4

The local authority should perform its duties and impose the rule of law on citizens to ensure continuity and sustainability of projects in sub-districts, neighborhoods, and villages. .5