

The Network's Engagement with Traditional Actors for Sustainable Peace



Traditional actors refers to traditional local leaders and community members such as indigenous, ethnic, tribal or clan elders or community members, including women and youth. Historically, traditional actors have played a vital role in conflict affected societies and situations of transition due to their established governance systems, along with their built-in conflict prevention, management, and dispute resolution mechanisms. Moreover, they have provided vital social services to their local communities, including humanitarian aid, health, and education, alongside state actors. As such, traditional leaders and actors have been able to establish unique connections based on mutual respect and trust with their local communities, promoting peace and welfare.

The relationship and nature of the contribution of traditional actors varies between contexts, with some traditional actors enjoying a high level of trust, given their recognized role as part of a formal structure, and/or their dual role as religious or spiritual authorities. However, in other contexts, the contributions of traditional actors are not fully acknowledged, and their potential remains underutilized. To this end, the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers works towards mobilizing the capacities and ingenuities of traditional leaders and actors, with inclusivity and context analysis at the center of the approach.



How Does the Network Advance the Leadership and Participation of Traditional Actors?

- ✓ Amplifying the voices of traditional actors, including women and youth, in promoting action-oriented recommendations and policies at the local, regional, and international levels through partnered advocacy initiatives.
- ✓ Cultivating and promoting partnerships and networking between traditional and religious actors and their communities and other key stakeholders in conflict transformation.
- ✓ Gathering evidence through research and analysis through strategic learning exchanges, discussions, and mapping exercises.
- ✓ Building the capacity of traditional actors to participate and lead in peace processes through training and programming opportunities.

The Network's Initiatives with Traditional Actors

Plan of Action for Traditional Leaders and Actors to Prevent Atrocity Crimes

The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, in partnership with the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention of the Responsibility to Protect are leading the development of a [Plan of Action for Traditional Leaders and Actors to Prevent Atrocity Crimes](#).¹ Regional and global consultations convene ethnic, indigenous, clan communities, and representatives of traditional societies and people, to discuss their roles and responsibilities to prevent atrocity crimes, including mediating in situations at risk of these crimes.

Supporting Tradition-and Faith-Oriented Insider Mediators (TFIMs)

[Tradition- and faith-oriented insider mediators](#)² (TFIMs) are traditional and religious authorities or leaders, and civil society actors, who incorporate traditional and religious elements in their conflict transformation efforts. Intrinsic to a conflict context, they work behind the scenes and use their influence to constructively transform the behavior and relationships of conflict actors. TFIMs draw upon tools and inspiration from multiple faiths, cultures, and traditions, as well as non-religious and non-traditional values. The Network seeks to increase the capacity and meaningful integration of these actors to advance dialogue and peacebuilding processes. The Network has produced six baseline case studies on the role of tradition- and faith-oriented mediators, including on: Colombia, Southern Thailand, Myanmar/Burma, Lebanon, Kenya, and Mali.

Peace Circle Process Training - Somalia

As part of the Network's work with Finn Church Aid in Somalia, the Network developed a [training manual for a peace circle process](#) specifically for traditional women and young women

¹ <https://www.peacemakersnetwork.org/traditionalpoa/>

² <https://www.peacemakersnetwork.org/our-work/tfim/>



to help build their skills around peacebuilding, peacemaking, and reconciliation. Based on the traditional Somali mechanism of conflict management called Xeer, the Peacemakers Network utilized peace circles as part of Somali rituals that are customarily used by traditional leaders. The Peace Circle Training is designed to support the implementation of the National Reconciliation Framework developed by the Somalia Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation (MoIFAR).

Religious and Psychosocial Support for Displaced Trauma Survivors - Colombia

As part of the United States Institute of Peace's (USIP) [Religious and Psychosocial Support for Displaced Trauma Survivors project](#),³ the Network co-facilitated a series of stakeholder consultations with religious and traditional actors in Colombia to learn more about the psychosocial support they are providing to persons displaced by armed conflict within their community. As part of these consultations, the Network interviewed indigenous organizations in Colombia to gather best practices to harmonize the indigenous cosmovision and its connection to the land with the strategies developed by governmental and nongovernmental mental health and psychosocial support service providers to address the trauma needs of displaced persons.

Supporting Efforts in Engaging with Local Religions and Traditional Leaders in Burkina Faso and Mali

In 2021, the Network conducted a [baseline study on the local conditions in western Burkina Faso and central Mali by highlighting the role of religious and traditional authorities in four communities](#).⁴ Since 2012, instability in the Sahel has contributed to ongoing humanitarian crises, insecurity, and illicit activities. Moreover, instability in Mali and Burkina Faso sponsored the growth of a large number of violent extremist actors, criminal groups, and a host of armed actors. This baseline study showcases how international and national peacebuilding actors can support traditional and religious authorities and social groups, including women and youth in peacebuilding and conflict prevention and transformation.

³ <https://www.peacemakersnetwork.org/psychosocial-support-training-for-faith-communities-in-colombia-2/>

⁴ <https://www.peacemakersnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Supporting-efforts-in-engaging-with-local-religions-and-traditional-leaders-in-Burkina-Faso-and-Mali-1.pdf>

