SYRIAN VOICES PAPER

TRADITIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISMS: THE ROLE OF DIFFERENT COMMUNITY FIGURES
TRADITIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISMS: THE ROLE OF DIFFERENT COMMUNITY FIGURES
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ABBREVIATIONS

- **FJM**: Formal Justice Mechanisms (also referred to as formal channel)
- **HOPe**: House of Peace
- **INGO**: International NGO
- **LNGO**: Local NGO
- **NGO**: Non-Governmental Organization
- **SPW**: Social Peace-Building Workshop
- **SVp**: Syrian Voices Paper
- **TCRM**: Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms (also referred to as informal channel)
ABOUT THIS PAPER

Syrian Voices paper is an action-research paper based on narrative inquiries. The purpose of these papers is to raise Syrian voices, stories and perspectives on the subject matter of social peace, and to share them amongst concerned stakeholders in order to advance best practices in the field of peace building, particularly concerning the Syrian community. These papers are being provided by House of Peace (HOPe) which is a project that aims to enhance social peace within Syrian society.

HOPe provides Social Peace Building Workshops (SPWs) in Lebanon, to groups of local communities and humanitarian NGOs working with the Syrian Crisis. The SPWs provide intensive context, conflict and conflict sensitivity analyses on each group’s community (and target community, in the case of NGO groups). Thus the nature of HOPe SPW provides space for intense discussion and storytelling between participants about topics concerned with social peace and Syrian communities. Reoccurring themes were noticed and collected from the field. For this paper, there was a review and analysis on SPW participants’ discussions and stories on traditional conflict resolution mechanisms (TCRM) and the role of different community figures. These stories and key findings were then presented to two Roundtables to collect further insights, stories, and recommendations.

SUMMARY

In reviewing the stories and perceptions of the Social Peace Building Workshop (SPW) participants and roundtable attendees, it was common to find that Syrian refugees relied more heavily on Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms (TCRM) than Formal Justice Mechanisms (FJM) in times of conflict. The main underlying reason for this is because many Syrians are not legally registered and thus have no legal presence or representation, and so prefer to evade formal channels in fear they may be deported, arrested, or not be given a fair trial. Moreover, sometimes the procedural process of FJM discourages Syrian refugees (and their host members) to approach it as it is considered slower, more expensive, and sometimes less reliable than TCRM. Moreover, community members prefer to resolve matters locally because culturally both Syrians and host community members are close knit, wish to handle matters in a manner that matches their values, and with someone they are familiar with and trust. Although, TCRM are the main alternative channel for Syrians, they do not always experience the same level of justice as their host members do. At times, conflicts are not fully resolved, they are just halted, and usually in these circumstances Syrian refugees felt oppressed. TCRM is also usually limited to resolving the conflict at hand, and not the underlying causes of it. On the other hand, TCRM was found to open pathways of positive interactions between Syrian refugees and their host members, because of supportive attitudes.

There was a general consensus in both roundtables that usually community figures that engage in TCRM come about by spontaneous intercession. However, there are cases in which there are key figures that are well known to act as mediators in solving community conflicts, such as the Moukhtar. The roundtables discussed which characters in a community have a tendency to act as key figures. They identified factors such as socio-economic status, social connections, reputation, familiarity, and services determine the likelihood of gaining key figure status. Thus, the Moukhtar, Community Elders, Contractors, School Principal, Religious Figures, and Chawish were noted for having a high tendency for acting as key figures. It was also observed that at times NGOs play a role in empowering community members to be engaged in conflict resolution as key figures or committees.
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CONTEXT

CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISMS: TRADITIONAL VS FORMAL

Conflict resolution attempts practicing ‘developmental procedures’ that are geared towards identifying the underlying reasons of presenting structural and cultural violence, while respecting their underlying values and identities concurrently.

Traditional (informal) and formal mechanisms of conflict resolution have become two prominent methods. Formal Justice Mechanisms (FJM), are addressed via the official governmental and legal entities of the community/state, and is usually under heavy systematic surveillance for any activities that may breach non-partisan or neutral actions/decisions. On the other hand Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms (TCRM) are based on the customary set of practices that are present in all communities. They are usually conducted through a third party arbitrator or mediator, or through other traditionally approved means of communication. Hence, the process of TCRM are public, thus participation and the approval of results is involuntary. It is usually carried out by an extended recognized individual(s) or group, such as families, friends, tribes, religious figures…etc. The Individual’s position in a conflict is usually towards their perceived kin-group, and so their actions, decisions and behaviors are held accountable to that group, regardless of intentions.

Traditional mechanisms are developed and formulated through sociological, chronological, demographic, environmental and geographical factors. They are time-tested and holistic solutions to conflict, and usually involve the process of conciliation, negotiations, dialogue, mediation and arbitration.

For this paper, individuals known in their community to be involved in Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms are defined as key figures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Conflict Resolution Mechanism</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Intermediary(ies)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal (Traditional)</td>
<td>Follows customs and traditions, is based on loyalty, trust and familiarity, More effective at handling disputes at a local level.</td>
<td>Random community members or groups (e.g. neighbors, families, peers), Key Figures, or informal committees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Follows the law, structured (i.e. hierarchy), is contractual, orderly, heavily monitored, and more effective at handling disputes at a National level.</td>
<td>Elected or carefully selected and certified official(s) (e.g. security guards, judges, lawyers…etc.).</td>
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2informal justice systems charting a course for human rights-based engagement: UNICEF
THE SITUATION OF SYRIANS IN TRADITIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISMS OF LEBANON

Although, Lebanon does have Formal Justice Mechanisms (FJM), their accessibility depends on socio-geographic determinants, due to the socio-political situation in Lebanon. Therefore, TCRM are the predominant approach for certain communities or regions in Lebanon. As for Syrian refugees, FJM are not always an option because — other than the common reasons they share with their host - many of them do not have legal residency, and thus fear they will be arrested or deported instead of receiving justice. It is stated that there is a lack of research on Syrian refugees and TCRM, however, available research shows that important determinants for Syrians capability to receive fair justice were cited to be age, social status, social capital, social network (contacts), education, and geographical conditions (urban/Rural).

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Many of the research papers on access to justice and conflict resolution or even Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms have stated that there is a lack of research in the field of informal justice particularly in concern with TCRM in Lebanon. Moreover, it was apparent, from HOPe’s and other researcher’s findings, that TCRM as a system carries complex determinants in social peace for Syrian refugees. Thus, it is a major theme that needs to be examined and addressed in the field of peace-building.

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4 Crisis and Control: Informal Hybrid Security in Lebanon — International Alert  
6 https://www.nwo.nl/onderzoek-en-resultaten/onderzoeksprojecten/i/10/12610.html
METHODOLOGY

STAGE 1 - SOCIAL PEACE BUILDING WORKSHOPS & DATA COLLECTION

HOPe provides Social Peace Workshops (SPWs) to Local and Humanitarian (i.e. NGO) Communities. The SPWs involve Context Analysis, Conflict Analysis, and a third focus for NGOs, Conflict Sensitivity (Please see annex for further details). These three foci are meant to create a perceptual change in the manner in which individuals perceive social peace, and also opens up discussion and analytical thinking on social peace issues within the participants’ community. Participants share stories of major conflicts that have occurred and conduct a full analysis on them. This includes a stakeholder analysis, which examines the actors involved in a conflict (please see annex for SPW tools). This particular tool was helpful in identifying stories involving TCRM and community figures. Thus HOPe collects and documents a lot of narrative data on conflict trends, social peace issues, connectors and dividers for every group that underwent the SPW. SPWs are provided 2-3 times a month to NGOs or Local community groups, participants ranged from 6-30 per group. The narratives collected for this proposed topic was from a pool of 351 participants (83% female, 17% male) from 35 SPW groups (22 Local communities, and 13 NGOs), between the ages of 16-70. Participants came from mainly Syrian backgrounds, but the rest were Lebanese, Palestinian, Egyptian or mixed.

STAGE 2 - ROUNDTABLES

After gathering narratives and key findings related to the proposed topic we presented them to two roundtables to collect and document attendees’ insights and recommendations. To organize the roundtable discussion inquires, key findings and narratives involving TCRM were presented first, and those involving community figures second. The discussion ended by roundtable participants suggesting recommendations. There were 29 roundtable participants in total who were from Local and International NGOs working on the Syrian crisis.

STAGE 3 - SYRIAN VOICES PAPER

The purpose of the Syrian Voices paper (SVP) is to provide a collection of perspectives on social peace issues concerning Syrian refugees. For this paper, all major and sub themes were categorized based on the roundtable discussion (I.e. comments, stories and insights) on presented key findings, which have been organized as ‘Observations’ (p. 11). The stories HOPe shared are also weaved into this paper in blue boxes (SPW Story), along with their stakeholder analysis picture.

7 NGOs: Participants were from NGOs that have work with the Syria population.
OBSERVATIONS
OVERVIEWS OF TRADITIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISMS

A majority of roundtable attendees believed that formal justice derives from traditional ways of conflict resolution, which are socially constructed. They also stated that Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms (TCRM) exists in all societies, even in those that have a well-developed and accessible formal justice system. However, TCRM become the more prominent channel in communities where formal channels are perceived as unreliable. Also, some roundtable participants agreed that societies which have endured war and conflict weakens their state and law systems, as these factors can lead to bias and unfair judiciary rulings, leaving people to perceive TCRM as a more just channel.

WHY TURN TO TRADITIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISMS?

The question ‘why do individuals rely on Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms (TCRM)?’ was proposed to roundtable participants to provide more specific details on the reasons TCRM is the predominant channel for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. (It’s worth mentioning that attendees felt even host communities’ use TCRM for similar reasons refugees do).

Legal Issues
• Syrians tend to use TCRM because not all of them are legally registered with the Lebanese government, and so they have no legal presence or representation making most reluctant to use the formal channels in fear they will be arrested or deported.
• Syrian refugees do not possess the same rights (e.g. work permit) as their host, and most Syrians (whether legally registered or not) are unaware of their actual rights, thus any complaints they may have about the injustices they faced, particularly in cases with host members, are poorly reported and rarely given a fair trial.

Procedural Issues in The Formal Justice Mechanisms
• Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms are not as strict as formal channels.
• Security forces do not usually interfere during conflicts concerning Syrians. They usually allow the community to resolve the matter traditionally, and are perceived to only intervene when a riot occurs.
• Most women are disinclined in going or complaining to formal officials about domestic violence or harassment, because they do not believe they will be taken seriously, or that these matters are not prioritized.
• Formal Justice Mechanisms take more time due to procedural processes, and some feel that even when complaints or charges are submitted formal channels fail to take action.
• Formal channels (e.g. court) are more expensive.
• Formal channels are not accessible at times due to the internal geo-political restrictions in Lebanon.

“A young man was accidently killed with a shot gun by his friend during a hunt they were on together. Normally, the friend should go to jail for manslaughter, but because of the intervention of the local elders and leaders, the young man was released and the father of the deceased young man dropped the case.”
Social Facets
• Usually communities prefer to resolve conflicts locally, without the interference of the authorities, as they wish to handle certain matters in a way that matches with their traditional and customary values.
• Some communities are close knit, and thus believe they know best in how to contain local matters.
• Most community members prefer to approach those they are familiar with and trust in times of crisis.
• As reputation is highly valued in both host and Syrian cultures, at times individuals do not approach the formal system with their problems so as to protect their reputation. They fear that private matters that could jeopardize their reputation will become known to the public.

Negative Perceptions Towards Formal Justice Mechanisms
• Some individuals view the state system as a foreign structure that does not reflect their needs or values, so some local communities tend to prefer resolving conflicts amongst themselves.
• People are wary or suspicious of corruption in the judicial system (e.g. bribe taking, conflicts of interest), therefore they do not trust the formal channel nor its representatives.
• Some communities believe the judicial system will not be fair in cases where government official(s)/bodies are part of the conflict.

An attendee gave the example of a torture chamber in a certain camp. The local authorities were informed about it, but most feedback from these formal channels was to ignore and cease any further investigations regarding the chamber.

SPW Story: Inaccessibility to Formal Justice Mechanisms
“A group of young boys riding their motorcycles, attacked two young Syrian boys on their way to school. One of the Syrian boys managed to escape, while the other fell behind allowing their pursuers to get close enough to stab him. The boy managed to escape, and was brought to medical attention. After the incident, the parents provided legitimate medical reports to the authorities, and an international NGO in the area but no action was taken to arrest the perpetrators. The perpetrators continued to harass the Syrian boy daily on his way to and back from school, to the point that he would return home in tears, and eventually became terrified of leaving his home. His parents decided to take the risk and pressured him to migrate illegally with his friends to Germany.
SPW participants stated that the reason his parents were unable to address the situation immediately was because one of the attacker’s brother was a security officer, which posed a threat to the entire family. They believed this displayed a great injustice to families who are unsecured and have no access to Formal Justice Mechanisms, even in matters where a life is under threat.”
WHICH COMMUNITY FIGURES PLAY A ROLE IN TRADITIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISMS?

This section looks at how individuals play a role in resolving conflicts through traditional means, what are their character traits, and which community members have a tendency to act as key figures. Roundtable participants agreed that generally community figures that attempt to mediate conflicts usually do so spontaneously. At times, it is just the good nature of these people witnessing a conflict that brings them to intervene in an attempt to stop it. However, there are community members that have been recognized as key figures for the possible following reasons:

1- The Community Member is Well Connected (has a large social network):
The impact key figures may have on a conflict is determined on how well recognized or well-connected they are. This is usually due to their position or role in the community, which may grant them more connections than most. It can also be those with high socio-economic status, as they will also tend to have a large social network to refer to. Roundtable participants also expressed that representatives of media platforms or political parties will most likely have strong relations and connections with authorities, thus, they have the accessibility to play the role of key figure.

2-They are Trusted by the Community:
Key figure traits that make community members trust them could be familiarity, popularity, age, reputation, the services they provide, or because they are active in working on reducing communal tensions.

3-They were Empowered or Appointed this Position by an International or Local NGO:
NGOs can provide status to key figures by allowing them to act as an intermediary between them and the community. This is done by either empowering already existing community figures, or by appointing one themselves.

One attendee shared how useful it was to their organization to interact with a representative of the community. The key figure they interacted with knew almost everyone in their community, and also understood how their organization operated, making it easier for transparent and peaceful communications to be made, especially in times when tensions arose. As a result, both the locals and NGO trusted this person to sort out communal conflicts.

Roundtable Participant Story
COMMON TYPES OF KEY FIGURES

The roundtable identified which key figures were common, and why these individuals had a higher likelihood in playing this role, and in which contexts:

1. **Moukhtar:** Some Roundtable attendees commented that the communities usually trust the Moukhtar in playing a role in resolving conflict.

2. **Elders:** It was generally agreed that local elders can intervene to resolve conflicts because of the culture’s respect towards the elderly, particularly men, as they are usually considered the authority figure in the family setting.

   An attendee shared the story of Abu Mazin, an elderly man residing in a settlement in Lebanon, who was so influential within his community he had become the arbitrator for almost all community matters as other members respected his opinions. Thus he has been deemed a major player in the TCRM of that community.

   Note: SPW participants pointed out that although the Syrian and Lebanese elders both sought out to cease the conflict, they never interacted with one another.

3. **Contractors:** The roundtable agreed that sometimes contractors play a role in TCRM, especially in cases where they are known to be active and influential in community affairs.

   There was a story of a large Syrian family who lived together and were infamous for being incendiary, to the point that even other Syrian families preferred to avoid communicating with them. Thus, only the contractor was able to solve conflicts generated by them because he had helped the Syrian family on many occasions, and so they have enormous respect for him.
4. **School principal**: tend to play a role in TCRM, especially for families, because they are involved in their children’s school life and are in daily contact with them.

**SPW Story: The Capacity of the School Principal**

“A while back a conflict occurred due to a group of boys who would wait outside a school for a group of Syrian girls so they could harass and follow them on their walk back home. The girls were terrified, and the issue escalated when the Syrian boys at the school learned about these incidences, and began having fights with the other boys. The incidences were failing to end, and with all the conflicts occurring as a result of this problem the girls decided to switch to another school. The new principal took measures to ensure the current or any related incidences would cease to occur, by taking in the support of the municipality and the influential religious leaders of the community. Participants who shared this story expressed that the previous principal remained stagnant on the issue because he was afraid local students would stop coming to his school. Also there were some security officials that were standing with the perpetrators which empowered them to do as they pleased. They mentioned that the Syrian boys fought back because they felt they were protecting the dignity of these girls. They also added that this solution did not stop the hatred and arising conflict in the area between the Syrian and local boys.”

For roundtable participants, the intentions behind the attitudes of school principals varied. Some of them said that a school principal could be supportive to Syrian students solely because he/she is paid by humanitarian agencies for the extra evening shifts, and so they have an interest in keeping Syrian students at their schools. On the other hand, some participants believed that principals play this constructive role out of their good will.

**SPW Story: Principal Prevents Harassment Outside of School**

“A man on a motorcycle was harassing Syrian girls who were on a school bus by riding alongside of them so as to take pictures of the girls. The principal was notified of this matter, and requested the bus redirect its route and come park outside the principal’s home. Once the bus parked in front of the house, the motorcyclist recognized the principal property and fled the scene. SPW participants felt the principal status and recognition was what prevented any further harassment, and considered him to be a key figure in protecting the girls in and outside the school domain.”
5. Religious Figures: are also common in intervening in conflict resolution because they are respected by both host and Syrian individuals, and because they are perceived as the moral compass for the community:

**SPW Story: The Capacity of Religious Figures**

“A Syrian family was having difficulty paying their rent, thus they offered to cover the repairs needed for the apartment to which the land lord agreed. However, once the apartment was repaired the land lord did not keep to his word, and persisted they leave the apartment. The family would have been homeless had a local sheikh not intervened on behalf of the Syrian family to calm the situation, and help sort out a negotiation that the land lord accepted.”

However, because religious figures are the moral guide for the community, it provides them leeway to take a more authoritative position. This can be an issue if the religious figure is prejudice or biased:

**SPW Story: Local Man Takes Syrian Food Baskets**

“During a distribution of food baskets (aid boxes) for Syrian refugees, a local man drove up to the distribution hub in his jeep, and took 30 aid boxes that were intended for the line of Syrian refugees who were waiting to collect their portion. The Syrians were silent but upset because they had all been waiting a long time for their turn and felt it was unfair that the local man got to go ahead of them and take a large portion of their food baskets. This aggravated one Syrian man to start arguing with the local while as was packing the portions into his jeep. This commotion caused a Sheikh to approach the situation with his assistant. The Sheikh began shouting at the Syrian man and told him not to interfere. The distribution hub then made the Syrian man leave without receiving his portion. The other Syrians did not interfere in the matter because they were afraid they would receive the same consequences. The participants expressed that the key figure involved sided with the local man because they had mutual interests.”
6. Chawish: The topic of Chawish as a key figure was one of the most heavily discussed as their position gives them the opportunity to be part of communal disputes.

Who is the Chawish?
The roundtable started by explaining that the Chawish is usually an active member of the community who acts as a representative of a camp, and who facilitates the provisions of most services delivered by NGOs. They are either related to or have connections with powerful communal entities such as high status families or governmental officials, which is why they have the capacity to play a role within the camp.

How does the Chawish obtain this position?
The Chawish at times get their position either because they imposed it on their community or because they were chosen to do so by a certain entity. For instance, at times the owner of the land where the camp is established, will select the Chawish. Some attendants commented that the Chawish could be in this position because they work as an informant, or because an NGO appointed him to act as an intermediary for them to take care of the camp. In return for the Chawish’s services they pay them, or provide education for their children or other beneficial services.

Does the Chawish help the community?
Some roundtable attendee’s commented that Chawish usually take an interest in resolving a conflict only if it benefits them. They also stated that the Chawish can exploit the position they have/are given by stealing, embezzling, or snooping. Thus many refugees complain that the Chawish can be untrustworthy. However, roundtable participants also mentioned that Chawish, can have a positive communal impact because they can identify potential sources of tension.

An attendant gave the example of a camp and Chawish his/her NGO was working with. The NGO of that area was providing its services only to a certain camp, though there was another near-by camp. Hence, to not let the other camp residents feel ignored, the Chawish arranged to have a school built in that camp for the children so that both camps feel equal.

In response to the discussion on whether Chawish have a positive impact or not, an attendee stated that regardless of whether the Chawish’s intentions are virtuous or not, NGOs have no choice but to interact with the Chawish. This is because the Chawish in most cases is selected by the community, and at times fulfills the roles Moukhtars do in villages, making it difficult for NGOs to avoid engaging with them.

Committees: Roundtable participants often brought up the fact that committees created for conflict resolution are a more sustainable force in TCRM because they tend to be more structured, appreciated and trusted by the community. Thus, they emphasized the point that NGOs should be working more on creating social committees, by providing an examples of how committees become a recognized source for conflict resolution.
Although NGOs did prefer to work with committees, they shared some cautionary points. Some expressed that a committee’s success in TCRM will depend on the attitude of its members, as some could be fair in their position while others could be more autocratic. Moreover, even if the provisions were made by NGOs to create a committee, it takes time and recognition to build trust between the community and the new representatives.

Are There Female Key figures? Identified key figures were predominantly men, however, female key figures do exist. Roundtable participants shared stories of known female key figures, and several themes arose:

**Gaining Key Figure Status through Female Empowerment**
There were many stories presented from the roundtable that revealed how female empowerment is providing channels for women to play a role in conflict resolution within their communities. One story was shared of a woman from a camp that did not have any key figure status. She became active after attending several trainings and workshops. She gradually started playing a role in conflict resolution within her community. She played this role differently than the Chawish near her area does, who is closely affiliated with NGO operations in the region. The Chawish who heard of her attempting this role, did not appreciate a woman doing it, thus a conflict arose around this idea. However, she managed to resolve the conflict by means of negotiation.

Roundtable participants shared many stories of women who were starting to open innovative spaces (e.g. yoga center) to work on decreasing tensions. For instance, one attendee shared that the women she had worked with in one community, had undergone women empowerment workshops, and continued to take similar courses because they wished to protect the society they live in. They now have had a large impact on social issues, such as domestic violence, and bring the community closer together.

**Female Key Figures Dealing with Sensitive Topics**
There was also a story brought up which shed light to the idea of protection. A story of a sexual abuse scandal involving two male youths was shared. To ensure a quiet closure of this case, the women dealt with the issue themselves, in fear other men of the community may get involved.

There was also another story brought up with a similar theme, in which there was a child abuse scandal that was unknown to the community and was discovered by its female members. Because it was a taboo subject the women did not alert the entire community, but instead resolved it themselves by going to a trusted source.

**Female ‘Chawish’**
There were also two stories shared of female Chawish who became so after their husbands died. In both cases the female Chawish was not considered a trusted person. In the first case the woman was demanding fees in return for her permissions and favors. While in the other case, the woman was considered very aggressive and more dominating than her late husband. It could be inferred from these stories that that female Chawish receive this position through their husband.
Why is there a lack of Syrian Key Figures?
Previous Syrian key community figures, are restricted from playing a role in Lebanon as their acceptance/legitimacy, which depend on their current socio-geographic and economic status, has been compromised. Also, there are official limitations to implement major projects with leadership and capacity building components for Syrian activists, supposedly because of the fear of re-creating the negative past experience with Palestinian camps. Therefore, in most cases, Syrian refugees were referring to and relying on contact beyond their circle of community that they used to rely on before in order to resolve their communal conflicts. This makes Syrians more vulnerable and more exposed to exploitation.

Problems with Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

While roundtable participants previously stated the reasons community members rely on Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms, they also stated the issues and consequences in doing so. It is worth mentioning the roots of this part of the discussion. The Roundtable took different standpoints in examining TCRM. Some participants viewed TCRM from a legal perspective and believed it to be a platform for vigilantism, and strongly advocated against it. While others observed it in the aspect of human rights, and expressed that it is the choice of the people to choose TCRM or not, and that Formal Justice Mechanisms (FJM) is not the only form of conflict resolution. To this some raised concerns that TCRM may cause a break down in state identity (anomie), encourage sub-identities and tribalism. These were some of the main points brought out of this discussion:

• Traditional conflict resolution is resolved by individual means (case by cases), thus the underlying causes of the conflict still remains since its origins are within the structure, traditions and norms of the community.
• At times when refugees are in peril they are forced to be compliant and acquiesce to any given solution as there is no other alternative for them, leaving many to feel oppressed.
• TCRM is not always reliable because it has no basic standards or structure, and is heavily influenced by customary and traditional trends.
• Traditional conflict resolution as a system might enable people to do more harm and violence because there does not always exist a consensus on suitable punishment.
• TCRM makes it difficult for organizations to identify conflict trends in the community, because there is no “paper trail” or official record of them.
• Encouraging traditional conflict weakens the role of the state.
• Women are not given a platform or given a role most of the time.

Problems with Key Figures
• At times individuals do not trust key figures because they can take sides.
• They can be prejudice or biased.
• They are prone to bribery.
• Because key figures usually are trusted and receive all kinds of valuable information, at times authorities use them as informants.

SPW Story: The Instability of Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

“A conflict of interest led a landlord’s wife to abruptly attack a Syrian woman who was renting an apartment in her building. The landlord and his wife wanted the Syrian woman and her family to move out late at night without prior notice, and without allowing them to take their belongings. During the conflict the Lebanese neighbors and the owner’s son interfered to defend the Syrian family and stop the wife from harming the Syrian woman. They took their time to finish packing and then left with the help of everyone.”
HOW SHOULD NGOs APPROACH TRADITIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISMS?

The discussion of Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms (TCRM), led way to a debate on whether NGOs should be involved in TCRM or not. Some felt NGOs should support TCRM, while others felt NGOs should support Formal Justice Mechanisms (FJM). Points were also made for and against NGOs empowering Key figures.

- NGOs should support the law and not the alternative resolutions. Even if NGOs need to engage in TCRM in situations where it is the only channel available, the necessity of law and authority must still be reinforced as unofficial methods are not an alternative.
- NGOs should not play a role in TCRM especially as an intermediary to formal channels, because NGOs communities will become dependent on them. In addition, NGOs have a tendency to change or cease their projects, thus they are not sustainable enough to play any role in TCRM.
- It is not the role of NGOs to support or not support TCRM, but to recognize, accept and possibly promote successful mechanisms.
- NGOs should support TCRM as they are a common result of the absence or inaccessibility of official authorities.
- Media and NGOs can play the role of documenting conflict in the absence of authorities.
- NGOs should be an intermediate channel between Formal Justice Mechanisms and the local communities they work with. Especially, in case of Syrian refugees who at times do not get justice in either TCRM or FJM.

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a. There was a child abuser in a camp that the parents had become aware of. They wanted to handle the situation delicately so they approached the local NGOs Psychosocial Support (PSS) workers that they and their children had sessions with. Upon examining the situation PSS workers felt it was right to take action immediately because the children were showing signs of abuse. The NGO contacted the authorities and assisted in convicting the abuser. Thus, the NGO’s reputation allowed it to play a positive intermediary role.

b. Another story was shared about an NGO that had intervened with two tribe leaders who were having a conflict within a community. The NGO interfered and proposed a solution to take both leaders to the court so that they may resolve this issue without disturbing the peace in the community.

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- NGOs should be working on empowering key figures by providing them with trainings on conflict resolution, so that they may be able to mediate more non-violent approaches within their community’s traditional ways.
- NGOs should be cautious in institutionalizing TCRM because one of the reasons community members turn to TCRM is because they are not conceived official.
- In providing someone status, NGOs also provide power. Thus at times, even though someone is suitable, the perception his/her fellow community members have of them, will change. They will no longer see the key figure as relatable to them, because he/she is no longer “one of them”.
- Key figures may exploit their position, as they may see this as an entitlement rather than a communal duty.
RECOMMENDATIONS

These were the recommendations raised during the roundtable that directly addressed Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanism’s (TCRM).

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING KEY FIGURES

• NGOs should start doing regular mapping/evaluation on main key figures in every community.
• NGOs must be careful to not inadvertently eliminate the role of some important partners in the community (e.g. municipalities’ officers).
• NGOs should start projects and trainings that help improve the role of communally selected key figures, even for those who are fulfilling this role poorly.
• NGOs should provide conflict resolution/peace-building and citizenship training to community activists.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON SUPPORTING ESTABLISHED OR DEVELOPING CONFLICT RESOLUTION COMMITTEES

• Conflict resolution committees should be more systematic, by having local democratic elections, rotation in the leadership, and by publicly specifying roles of each appointed member.
• Current local committees’ role is limited, thus NGOs should assist in enhancing the role of committee’s in communal affairs, by offering them trainings to make them more qualified to meet more community needs.
• There should be more female committee members.
• NGOs need to create networks with activists of each area.
• NGOs should create a monitoring system that oversees current committees to improve outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NGOS AND THEIR ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY

• There should be more safe spaces in communities to have discussions and open dialogues for members of different backgrounds.
• NGOs should reconsider utilizing the Chawish as an intermediary between NGOs and the community.
• There is a need to start developing ways in which NGOs can document incidences of conflicts resolved/suppressed through informal channels.
• NGOs should start working with and supporting formal legislative and judiciary establishments by acting as a link between local communities and higher authorities.
• NGOs should inform the communities on how to interact or approach formal channels available to them.
CONCLUSION

This paper was an exploration of Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms (TCRM) and the role of community figures, particularly in the cases involving Syrians in Lebanon. Observations did reveal that reasons Syrian refugees rely on TCRM were the same reasons their host members did as well, except for the reason that a majority of Syrian refugees experience apprehension in considering Formal Justice Mechanisms (FJM) because they are not legally registered causing most to evade it. TCRM was noted to play a positive role in offering pathways for host members to support Syrians in their time of need. However, TCRM has its misgivings one of which is that Syrians (particularly refugees) do not always receive the justice they seek, because there are times their concerns and rights are disregarded or oppressed, and sometimes resolving a conflict comes at their expense.

Moreover, community figures usually intervene spontaneously, but there were certain community members that had the tendency to act as Key figures due to their services, socio-economic status, influence, reputation, and social connections. Moreover, NGOs at times empower key figures by allowing them to play an intermediary role between them and the community. Key figures impact on the outcome of a conflict is determined by their connections, status and popularity. The Moukhtar, Elderly, Contractors, School principal, Religious figures, Chawish were considered the most common community members to be key figures. It was noted that there is a lack of female or Syrian key figures. While Female key figures are uncommon they do exist, and usually become so through the female empowerment sessions being offered to communities from NGOs. Also, it was shared that females, usually handle taboo cases (i.e. sexual abuse) because they are more considerate about reputation, and handle things more delicately. Syrian key figures are more uncommon, which is because the situation of Lebanon politically and socially does not provide the capacity for them to occur. Interestingly, roundtable participant’s preferred committee’s to key figures, and most agreed committees are not ideal, but they are the best functional alternative in TCRM.

Although this was not a proposed topic for the roundtable, the points on whether NGOs should be more or less involved in TCRM was consistently brought up. Roundtable attendees came from different mind-sets on this topic. Some were against supporting TCRM because, from the aspect of the law-system, they believed it weakens the state role, and leaves room for vigilante behavior. Also, others believed it may cause anomy which may lead to societal chaos. However, many supported NGO role in TCRM because, they believe it is the right of the people to decided how they want to resolve their conflicts, and because TCRM is the only alternative for places where Formal Justice Mechanisms (FJM) are unreliable. However there were those who believed NGOs should just play intermediary role in conflicts, like documenting conflict cases, providing key figures with an official status, identifying best TCRM, and act as a bridge between local communities and FJM. Supporting key figures was also debated, some believed NGOs empowering key figures will harm their efforts in TCRM.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our thanks and gratitude to our participants for sharing their stories, the people who attended the roundtables, and our hardworking team members who made this possible.

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The observations provided in this document are based on collected and recorded dialogue and are not a representation of the opinions of House of Peace or its donors.
REFERENCES


ANNEX

INSTRUMENTS:

The workshops have three foci: Context and Conflict analysis, and an additional focus for NGOs; Conflict Sensitivity analysis. Each foci had its own tools designed to stimulate dialogue and gather information on the topic of social peace.

Tool description:

Context Analysis: The tools in this focus are designed to analyze the context (i.e. community) of the participants:
- Appreciating the community: the participants specify positive traits that exist in their community.
- Community mapping: the participants map out their community, and discuss shared public spaces and establishments. They pinpoint areas that have high tension and areas that practice peaceful gatherings.
- PESS: participants discuss; Political, Economic, Security and Social factors that influence social peace within the community.

Conflict Analysis: The tools encourage discussion of major and minor conflicts within the community and how they are related to context.
- Story Telling: During this space, participants share and discuss major conflicts (stories) that have been occurring in their community, and pick 3-2 stories to do a full analysis on.
- Stakeholder analysis: the participants go over actors involved, and study and discuss their relationships to the community, to one another, and to the chosen stories.
- Fish Bone: This is a tool that visually displays the minor and primary causes of a major problem and its related outcomes. The participants draw and apply this diagram to their selected stories.
- Identifying Capacities of Peace (CP) and Capacities of War (CW): Here the participants list elements in their community that are promoters or potentials of peace (CP) and war (CW), and discuss it.

Conflict Sensitivity Analysis: The tools in conflict analysis are designed to allow NGO workers observe the elements of their project and see how they relate to capacities of peace and war.
- Conflict Cake: This is a visual tool that goes over the elements of the project in relation to CP and CW.

LOCATIONS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEBANON</th>
<th>SYRIA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Lebanon: Tripoli, Al-Chok, Wadi Khalid.</td>
<td>• Damascus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Lebanon: Bachamoun.</td>
<td>• Latakia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beirut: Shatila, Bourj al Barajneh, Tareek Jidieh, Cola.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beqaa: Chatoura, Majdal Anjar, Saadanayel, Ghazze.</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Lebanon: Hasbaya.</td>
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**Appreciating the Community**
Participants list the pros of their community.

**Mapping**
Participants map out their community (i.e., local establishments, neighbors, transportation pathways).

**PESS**
Participants list all factors related to PESS that are contributing to their conflicts.

**Stakeholder Analysis**
Participants identify main actors and their relationships.

**Fish Bone**
Diagram that helps observe secondary and primary causes about a main conflict.

**Conflict Sensitivity Tool**
This tool is mainly used with NGOs to review if their projects practice conflict sensitive when aiding their target populations.

**Context Analysis Tools**
- **Political**
- **Economy**
- **Social**
- **Security**

**Conflict Analysis Tools**
- **Stakeholder Analysis**
- **Fish Bone**

**Conflict Sensitivity Tool**
- **SPW Framework: Tool Examples**