

PEACEWORKS



Nurturing and Sustaining Facilitator Networks

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

By Ruben Grangaard and Carlisle Levine



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**MEDIATION,
NEGOTIATION
& DIALOGUE**

ABOUT THE REPORT

This report is based on a meta-review, commissioned by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), of five facilitator networks the Institute nurtured in Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Pakistan, and Tunisia. Similar efforts by other organizations were also assessed. The report identifies factors that help make networks viable, effective, and sustainable and presents findings relevant to the wider peacebuilding community.

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Cover photo: The Network of Iraqi Facilitators (pictured in Baghdad in 2015) has successfully facilitated district-level peace agreements across the Salahaddin and Nineveh Provinces and conducted dialogue processes in other locations in Iraq. (Photo by USIP)

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Summary



There is widespread agreement that leveraging, strengthening, or creating a network in the pursuit of social change can have an impact greater than the sum of the network's parts, and this holds true for networks engaged in conflict resolution. To better understand how and under what conditions facilitator networks can be effective in different conflict-affected settings, the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) commissioned a meta-review of the facilitator networks it has supported in Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Pakistan, and Tunisia.

Drawing on a variety of sources—project documentation, interviews with USIP staff and network leaders, interviews with or surveys of facilitators, a literature review, and interviews with other organizations supporting facilitator networks—the meta-review found that viable, effective, and sustainable networks share several key traits. They have a clear management structure that is fit for purpose and that adequately supports its members; they carefully select members and provide them with opportunities for capacity building; and they have access to sufficient human and financial resources to support operations over the long term.

In assessing how best to design, manage, and sustain facilitator networks, the review found that members of effective networks engage frequently with one another and with the network's management structure. They also have a shared vision of their network and sense of ownership concerning it. The review found further that a network's effectiveness in mitigating and resolving conflict is contingent on a number of factors: the most effective facilitator teams have clearly defined roles, represent the relevant identity groups, have diverse skill sets and strong local knowledge, have the capacity to carry out an accurate conflict analysis, are committed to working as part of the network for the long term, and are adequately compensated.

This report is aimed at the wider peacebuilding community; in addition to identifying good practices for USIP-supported facilitator networks, it reveals patterns applicable to other aspects of USIP's work.



Members of the Colombian Network of Women Mediators (pictured in 2016) have substantial experience as peacebuilders in a country with decades of violent conflict. Members engage with the broader peacebuilding community in Latin America and beyond, acting as mentors and trainers. (Photo by USIP)

Introduction and Methodology

The practice of dialogue has a long track record in the field of peacebuilding. In the 1960s, John W. Burton and Leonard Doob pioneered dialogue approaches with the aim of fostering peaceful outcomes in places as diverse as Cyprus, the Horn of Africa, and Northern Ireland.¹ Since then, dialogue has become a core tool in the peacebuilder’s toolkit, employed at local, national, and international levels to achieve a broad range of goals, from directly reducing violent conflict to creating the conditions necessary for peace to take root in a society.

According to the literature on dialogue, having skilled facilitators lead the process is important for bringing about successful outcomes.² Facilitators need a strong grasp of the local context and cultural norms and must be seen as legitimate by the stakeholders in a dialogue process. But facilitators also need the kinds of skills—such as active listening skills and the ability to ask the

right questions at the right time—that are often acquired or enhanced through training programs and other forms of capacity building provided or funded by external organizations. These entities, which can include multilateral institutions, national organizations, and international peacebuilding organizations, are collectively referred to in this report as “support organizations.”

Since 2003, as part of its programming in multiple countries, the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) has identified and strengthened the capacities of facilitators to help resolve conflicts and train others in conflict mitigation skills. These efforts have in some cases gone beyond building the capacity of individuals and grown into efforts to support the construction of networks of people who can learn from each other and work together to resolve larger and more complex conflicts. Yet despite the emphasis on developing local facilitator networks

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In 2018, USIP commissioned BLE Solutions, an evaluation consulting firm, to conduct a meta-review of its efforts to foster facilitator networks.³ The relevant projects were all based on the idea that creating facilitator networks would increase the reach and effectiveness of the individuals who comprised them, but they had different designs, resource allocations, implementation strategies, and results. The meta-review approach, which evaluates a set of projects with similar theories of change across geographies, allowed for comparisons across contexts with the goal of identifying factors that contributed to or impeded success and of revealing patterns applicable to other aspects of USIP's work.

This report, aimed at the wider peacebuilding community, distills some of the meta-review's main findings. It also highlights insights from the wider literature on facilitation that are pertinent not only to USIP's work but also to other organizations that support peacebuilding networks. It analyzes USIP networks in five countries: Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Pakistan, and Tunisia. A network in Libya was originally included but was omitted when gathering data in Libya proved impractical.

The meta-review was organized around a number of broad topics: design decisions related to fostering facilitator capacity and networks; criteria and processes for selecting members; approaches to increasing facilitator capacity and strengthening networks; and networks' effectiveness, achievements, and sustainability. The meta-review began with a thorough review of project documentation from USIP's facilitator networks, as well as interviews with a number of USIP staff and network leaders. In the next phase, in-country members of the evaluation team conducted interviews with a sample of facilitators across the networks, chosen to be representative in terms of geography, ethnicity, religion, tribe, gender, and age. All facilitators who were not interviewed were given a complementary survey.

The evaluation team also conducted brief case studies on specific initiatives led by facilitators in Colombia, Iraq, and Tunisia. These allowed the evaluation team to dive deeper into specific facilitation efforts and collect information directly from participants involved in these processes. Finally, the evaluation team carried out a literature review and some interviews with other organizations supporting facilitator networks to better understand similar efforts led by other organizations in the relevant countries.⁴

Facilitator Networks



There is widespread agreement that under the right circumstances, a strong network of like-minded people can have impact that is greater than the sum of its parts, and this holds true for networks engaged in conflict resolution. As a member of the USIP facilitator network in Pakistan suggests, “Working together is more helpful in such endeavors because conflict is very complex, and we need more people with a wide range of experience to intervene in such situations. Engaging with others not only enhances our strength, but gives us impetus to work more energetically for such causes.”⁵

A common argument in support of networks in conflict-affected states is that the complex nature of the challenges requires multiparty solutions. Only when the unique but complementary skills, capacities, and backgrounds of multiple individuals, organizations, and other entities are applied in a coordinated fashion can these problems be solved effectively. A report on local networks issued in 2018 by the International Peace Institute found that this argument holds true in various contexts, and that networks with access to a diversity of expertise, experiences, and constituencies are more effective than narrower peacebuilding approaches.⁶ The report also highlighted the advantages of networks for expanding geographical coverage and strengthening partnerships vertically and horizontally.

The potential to draw on a diversity of expertise and experience was a motivating factor for all the USIP-created facilitator networks. USIP staff believed that bringing facilitators together would make them more effective in mitigating and resolving local and sub-national conflicts. A further goal for networks was

to create cadres of trainers who could share their expertise and experience with other groups within a community, region, or country, thereby increasing the impact of USIP’s interventions. The underlying idea was that each network would serve as a platform for peer learning and allow members to identify opportunities for collaborating with different ethnic, religious, and tribal groups. Such collaborations would ensure that diverse experiences from different geographies and demographic groups (e.g., young and old, women and men, urban and rural dwellers) were represented.

Even though most networks selected members from a national pool of candidates, none of the networks facilitated national-level processes, except in terms of facilitating subnational processes that ran in parallel with national dialogues. By default, the number of individuals with the stature and experience to facilitate national dialogues is small, and these individuals may have less to gain from membership in a network that includes a broad range of experience levels.

The following subsections provide an overview of the five USIP-supported facilitator networks, presented in chronological order of their establishment, and then draw out some shared lessons from a small set of non-USIP initiatives.

IRAQ: NETWORK OF IRAQI FACILITATORS, 2003–PRESENT

USIP entered Iraq in 2003 as part of the international postwar reconstruction effort and soon after began training facilitators. The initial motivation for training facilitators was to build capacity for effective local conflict mitigation. However, a sense of cohesion and

Box 1.

FACILITATING PEACE IN MAHMOUDIYA

The farming region of Mahmoudiya, south of Baghdad, had been wracked by a prolonged cycle of violence involving Sunni and Shia tribes and terrorists linked to al-Qaeda. The daily violence, including assassination of local council members, severely inhibited freedom of movement, shut down the market, displaced many sheikhs, and generally tore apart the social fabric.

In 2007, the US Army's Tenth Mountain Division, which had spent many months trying to quell the violence, contacted USIP for assistance in an intertribal reconciliation effort.^a Working with the Iraqi facilitators it had previously supported, USIP helped design and implement an intervention to alleviate tension between Sunni and Shia tribal leaders.

Over the course of four months of dialogue, the facilitators drew on their skills and knowledge, their familiarity with the context and the people involved, USIP's ongoing support, and the commitment of the tribal leaders to help the sheikhs develop and agree to a peace agreement that still endures.

Note

- a. For more on the US Army's perspective on this effort, see United States Institute of Peace, "In Iraq's Former 'Triangle of Death,' a Decade of Stability," August 9, 2017, www.usip.org/publications/2017/08/iraqs-former-triangle-death-decade-stability.

identity developed among some of the Iraqi facilitators in those first few years, born out of working together during a challenging time and in a dangerous environment. After initial seed investment, USIP played less of a role in subsequent years. However, the facilitators continued to work to mitigate local-level conflicts and build the capacity of other actors to facilitate conflict mitigation activities.

In 2007, at the request of the US Army's Tenth Mountain Division, USIP reengaged with the facilitators on the Mahmoudiya dialogue process (see box 1), which led to a peace agreement between Sunni and Shia sheikhs after years of violence. The sustained facilitation process for this complex conflict created an increased sense of shared purpose and ownership that had ripple effects beyond the six facilitators directly involved. Indeed, some USIP staff saw this initiative as the launchpad for what became formally known as the Network of Iraqi Facilitators (NIF). The initiative served to convince USIP of the value of supporting the facilitators' efforts and helping them build a network structure to sustain their interaction and collaboration.

In 2012, with its role gradually narrowing to providing financial and technical support, USIP helped establish a nongovernmental organization (NGO), Sanad for Peacebuilding, that would serve as the NIF's secretariat. Since the rise of ISIS, USIP and NIF have focused the bulk of their efforts on barriers to voluntary, safe, and sustainable (long-term) return of internally displaced persons to their home communities and on challenges to resilience. Today, the NIF is recognized as one of the foremost conflict management entities in Iraq, known for successfully having facilitated nine district and subdistrict peace agreements and the return of internally displaced individuals across the Salahaddin and Nineveh Provinces, as well as for conducting dialogue processes in a number of other locations in Iraq.

One of the NIF facilitators explained the evolution of the network in this way:

We reached a stage where all of us knew when to seek assistance from Sanad or USIP or inform them of what we could or could not do. We were open. Some of us play leadership roles as facilitators or trainers; others are better in designing or management. When we became more mature, we started showing local leadership in prediction, initiation, design, management, and delivery.

AFGHANISTAN: NETWORK OF AFGHAN FACILITATORS, 2008–11

USIP launched the Network of Afghan Facilitators in 2008. At that time, Afghanistan was experiencing an upsurge in violence that prompted the international community to reexamine its approach to the conflict and consider more sustainable mechanisms to address it. The Afghanistan program at USIP, aware of USIP's experience with the NIF, wanted to create a similar but context-appropriate facilitator network in Afghanistan by building on and connecting existing local government, civil society, tribal, and regional networks.

In the absence of a strong local USIP office to support the network at the time, USIP identified a local NGO and USIP contractor, the Welfare Association for the Development of Afghanistan (WADAN), to serve as the network's secretariat. USIP's goal was to strengthen WADAN's capacity so that it could eventually serve as the secretariat for the facilitator network without USIP's support. However, the Afghan context made fostering facilitator capacity and developing a network challenging. The level of violence was high, road travel was risky, and the telephone system functioned only intermittently, all of which made it difficult for partners to convene, train, and communicate.

Over time, USIP's engagement with the network faded, and WADAN decided to absorb the network, providing job opportunities within the organization for a number of facilitators. WADAN also conducted programming that built on the USIP guidance and curriculum for recruiting and instructing trainers and monitoring their work. For example, WADAN replicated USIP's Dispute Resolution Councils program and, as part of it, two network members provided training.⁷ WADAN's goal was to establish twenty district-level dispute resolution commissions that could each resolve about thirty disputes a year and thus benefit up to a total of twelve thousand people.⁸ WADAN was thus able not only to carry forward USIP's legacy, but also to build upon it and increase its impact.

PAKISTAN: PAKISTANI FACILITATOR NETWORK, 2009–PRESENT

USIP first developed a presence in Pakistan around 2008–09. As in Afghanistan, the idea to establish a network of facilitators was inspired by the success of the NIF. USIP identified an in-country organization and USIP grantee, the Sustainable Peace and Development Organization (SPADO), to manage the network. This management model, leveraging an existing in-country partner organization as the secretariat, was unique to the networks in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The network in Pakistan differed from all other USIP networks in that its scope was not national; instead, with the aim of using its limited resources most effectively, it focused its operations on the city of Karachi and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. It also differed in the focus of its operations. The main objective was to train members in conflict management and make them "master trainers" who could replicate USIP's conflict management trainings in remote parts of the country, thereby scaling up the impact of the program within the province at low cost.

Box 2.

BUILDING TIES AT THE AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN BORDER

The Pashtun tribal communities along the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan have a long history of conflict. The area was on the front line of the Cold War and the Global War on Terror, and it continues to be roiled by long-standing tribal conflicts that are both aggravated by and contribute to national, regional, and global conflicts.

In early 2010, in an effort to build trust and develop a common agenda for peace and security cooperation, USIP, WADAN, and SPADO brought together twelve members from the Network of Afghan Facilitators and twelve members from the Pakistani facilitator network to facilitate a series of dialogues among key actors from both sides of the border.

In 2014, continuing this collaboration, the Pakistan-Afghanistan Civil Society Forum was formed, with the objective of fostering trust between institutions from both countries. The Civil Society Forum initiated a track 2 diplomacy exchange program with members of the facilitator networks to engage civil society representatives in capacity building, workshops, and conferences in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Through civil society, they have continued to engage government institutions, media, and political leadership. SPADO sees this as a long-term process of institutionalizing peacebuilding at the policy level and at the community level.

USIP funding for the network was intermittent from 2010 and ended in 2013. However, the network still exists. SPADO has opted to let the network remain as an “unregistered” organization that depends on volunteers, rather than setting it up as an NGO. Registration would entail a variety of official requirements, such as fundraising for the network, establishing an office, and regularly financing the network. SPADO believes that because the network is informal and has no funded secretariat or coordinating body, it fosters among its members a greater sense of shared responsibility for the success of its work.

One member of the Pakistani facilitator network points to the benefits it offered: “This network provided me a chance to work on conflict issues in my own tribal areas, and I have remained involved in cross-border peace processes between Pakistan and Afghanistan as well, which was a very different and enriching experience. All this was made possible because of this network.”

Since 2015, the master trainers have focused on training local government actors and police departments as part of an effort to institutionalize peacebuilding in government institutions. Master trainers have also built capacity of civil society actors and religious leaders. Both civil society organizations and government officials are represented among SPADO’s facilitators, which allows the organization to model government–civil society partnerships for other entities.

SPADO and WADAN were concerned about tensions between communities living along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. With USIP’s support and building on their work with their respective facilitator networks, they decided to join efforts to address them. Through their collaboration, they sought to help communities living on both sides of the border build trust with one another and develop a shared agenda for peace (see box 2).

TUNISIA: ALLIANCE OF TUNISIAN FACILITATORS, 2014–PRESENT

In the wake of the Arab Spring of 2010–12, USIP launched efforts to build facilitator capacity in Libya and Tunisia. In both countries, USIP had a vision of a network structure from the outset but used the term “alliance” instead of “network.” USIP believed that “alliance” suggested a less formal configuration, which would demand less of a commitment from USIP than the one it continued to make in Iraq. In 2014, the two alliances were launched in earnest.

The Alliance of Libyan Facilitators was discontinued a couple of years later, in large part because the country was sliding into civil war, making it impossible to sustain operations. In Tunisia, however, USIP saw a clear role for the Alliance of Tunisian Facilitators (ATF) to play in the aftermath of the national dialogue process. As one ATF facilitator explained, “We are in much need of facilitation. The region is always torn by conflict, and the only way to transform the current situation is through facilitation carried out by local actors who have the trust and legitimacy to intervene.” The young age of the majority of alliance members also presented an opportunity, since it aligned with a broad trend within the international community of trying to engage and partner with youth to make a greater contribution to peace in the country.

Although the ATF has not received or attracted the same level of investment as the NIF, USIP has been able to sustain the alliance by establishing a USIP staff member in the network coordinator role, holding trainings and meetings, and disbursing small grants to fund the implementation of facilitated dialogues across Tunisia. However, limited funding has required the coordinator to make difficult choices regarding the ATF’s investments, often with trade-offs between holding trainings and offering small grants.

Most of the ATF’s dialogues have focused on improving government-citizen relationships (see box 3 for an example).

Box 3.

BRINGING TOGETHER CIVILIANS AND SECURITY FORCES IN MEDENINE

In 2018, ATF started to work in Medenine, a town in southeastern Tunisia, to address one of the major triggers of conflict in Tunisia: the violent dynamic between civilians—particularly youth—and security forces in marginalized communities. Members of the ATF brought together at-risk youth, city elders, local unions, and police to discuss the cycle of violence and create local mechanisms for communication between youth and police.

In 2020, as part of the dialogue process, ATF facilitators worked to create local consensus for a conflict mediation unit that would mitigate tension and violence between police and the community and foster collaboration in keeping communities safe. This unit has played a key role in forestalling the escalation of tensions. For example, during a wave of demonstrations in January 2021, many young people gathered to protest the detention of a minor by the security forces. To prevent violent confrontation, youth from the conflict mediation unit worked with members of the security forces to secure the minor’s release. The unit then conducted outreach to youth and police to reinforce for both groups the importance of acting within the law. This step prevented violence in Medenine at a time when clashes between youth and police were occurring in other regions.

Box 4.

SUPPORTING THE FORMATION OF NEW NETWORKS IN LATIN AMERICA

Although they have not received financial or technical support since 2019, the Colombian Network of Women Mediators and its members continue to engage with both USIP and the broader peacebuilding community in Latin America and beyond. In 2020, as USIP pursued a new pilot project focused on building capacity of women peacebuilders in Venezuela, members of the network co-led the project design and training implementation and served as mentors in cross-cultural exchanges.

Building on lessons learned from the Colombian network, and in response to the appetite for and success of the pilot project with Venezuelan women, USIP will fund a network of Venezuelan women peacebuilders in 2021. The network aims to link women peacebuilders, leveraging their knowledge and voices to influence local and national issues and providing space for cross-cultural learning. Members of the Colombian network will continue to serve as mentors and trainers to share their significant experiences and insights with their Venezuelan counterparts.

COLOMBIA: NETWORK OF WOMEN MEDIATORS, 2014–PRESENT

In 2014, the government of Colombia and the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) were already engaged in a peace process, and the government had just announced that this process would include an explicit focus on gender, in line with UN Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security, which pushed for women’s inclusion at the negotiating table.⁹ Although UN Women was supporting a summit in Colombia that brought together nine different women’s platforms on women and political participation, no organization was focused on women’s role in the facilitation of dialogue.

Because USIP was deeply involved in Colombia’s peace process through the work of its senior advisor for peace processes Virginia “Ginny” M. Bouvier, it understood that women had been facilitating dialogues at the local level for many years, but on their own, with little visibility and scant training. USIP saw formation of a women’s network, then considered a pilot project, as having the potential for important and far-reaching effects: the network could be replicated in other communities and territories in Colombia; the local women leaders could become national-level actors, leading advocacy and offering training of trainers; and the members could support each other’s efforts and serve as resources for one another. USIP offered them capacity-strengthening opportunities, as well as spaces in which they could share their experiences, and it decided to launch a network of “mediators” rather than “facilitators” because mediation is a more familiar term in Colombia.

With funding from the US Agency for International Development, USIP partnered with the Autonomous University of Bucaramanga’s Institute of Political Studies to develop and foster this network. Together, USIP and the institute invited a range of organizations to join the network so it would reflect Colombia’s socioeconomic and racial diversity and would include women’s and

victims' groups whose leaders were participating in the official peace talks. USIP ultimately selected thirty-three women to include among the network's mediators. They came from twelve different departments of Colombia and were drawn from diverse organizations and backgrounds: victims and human rights groups, peasant organizations, Afro-Colombian and indigenous organizations, ex-combatants, religious groups, academia, women's organizations, and government.¹⁰

The network formed a steering committee that included two women in Bogotá and one each from Putumayo and Cauca. While the women came together only when USIP could convene them, they kept in touch via a WhatsApp group and a listserv that USIP managed. Even though USIP did not have the funding to support this network as it had supported some others, it was able to fund trainings and provide a few small grants that helped elevate the profile of the women and support local-level conflict mitigation efforts. The women, it should be noted, would have acted as facilitators even without USIP's involvement, as one network member explained:

Before, none of us had seen ourselves as mediators, but when each of us was talking about her experience, we found elements of mediation that we were already using, for example, in meetings as part of the paramilitary demobilization process between victims and those who had victimized them, or when preparing the communities for the arrival of the demobilized paramilitary members as part of the reinsertion process.

As several network members commented, however, the USIP-led trainings and support proved valuable in their work.

In recent years, the women mediators have increasingly engaged with USIP programming in other contexts (see box 4). Their substantial experience as women peacebuilders in a country with decades of violent conflict is seen as an important resource for USIP's broader work.

NON-USIP INITIATIVES

The meta-review evaluators consulted seven other (non-USIP) peacebuilding organizations with recent or existing facilitator network efforts in the countries of focus: two local NGOs, four international NGOs, and one multilateral organization. Like USIP, most of these organizations made capacity building and mentoring the cornerstone of their initiatives. Only the multilateral organization made the development of a formal network of facilitators a primary goal. The other support organizations created informal networks as a low-cost way to ensure that the individuals they trained could continue to communicate with one another or even meet in person outside of formal capacity-building activities.

Several factors determined the decision by support organizations to build and strengthen skills of individuals or local peacebuilding organizations, including the conflict context, availability of resources, partners' capacities, and ability to engage with key stakeholders in a given conflict or conflict environment. A few of the organizations were also motivated to conduct trainings to "level the playing field"—that is, to address power imbalances by strengthening individuals' or organizations' capacities to contribute productively to conflict mitigation or to fully participate in a democratic transition process. The support organizations considered facilitation capacity a critical and universally applicable skill for any context, necessary regardless of where a country might be on the conflict spectrum. It was noted, however, that increased capacity could be effectively deployed only if there was sufficient political space within a given context.

The non-USIP networks reviewed demonstrated a range of structures. Some were inspired by NGOs, while others were created independently by facilitators and supported by NGOs. Some met in person, while others engaged primarily via online platforms. As indicated above, one was intended to be a formal network, while most were informal networks. For the support



Women hold hands forming a human chain during a demonstration against increasing violence between illegal armed groups in Buenaventura, Colombia, on February 10, 2021. (Photo Juan B. Diaz/AP)

organizations, informal structures were valuable because they could bring together people who might be operating in isolation in highly contentious spaces. Conscious that they were outside actors, the support organizations did not want to insist that facilitators be part of a formal and rigid structure.

In seeking to help facilitators resolve conflicts at the local and community levels, the support organizations identified a variety of outcomes generated by the networks:

- Ripple effects: The successful resolution of a conflict in one community led to requests from nearby communities for similar facilitation support.

- Organic success: Members were asked to resolve conflicts independently of network activities.
- Institutional success: In some instances, networks were able to build facilitation skills within formal and informal institutions.
- Cultural impact: Communities that engaged with a cohort of facilitators gained a greater awareness of the skill set facilitators need and began to think differently about how to resolve conflict.
- Unearthing of issues: Community-led dialogues led to unexpected issues being brought up by members of the community.

Key Considerations for Support Organizations

For an international peacebuilding organization such as USIP, what are the key considerations for nurturing a facilitator network? Informed by the meta-review's in-depth examination of networks supported by USIP, by the literature review of networks fostered by other support organizations, and by the broader literature on peacebuilding networks and facilitator best practice, this section identifies six considerations—timing, formal versus informal networks, member selection, development of peacebuilding skills, resources and management, and member engagement and network value—and presents practical recommendations for organizations that are setting up or supporting facilitator networks.

TIMING

USIP decided to establish each of the five networks when a political transition was taking place, and when there was (or appeared to be) sufficient nationwide stability (or at least pockets of stability) to allow facilitators to operate. This approach was echoed by network managers from other international peacebuilding organizations. The absence of political space and prevalence of instability created significant problems at times for the Network of Afghan Facilitators and made it nearly impossible for the Alliance of Libyan Facilitators to continue its work.

Facilitator networks are often launched quickly to take advantage of windows of stability. While this approach is understandable, it means that there is little time to identify other international and national organizations undertaking similar efforts, or to identify other facilitators already working in the context. The result may be duplication or disruption of existing efforts as a new structure moves into already occupied spaces.¹¹

Two recommendations are relevant to the timing of network formation. First, the initial step, even before investing in facilitator capacity building, is to **undertake a needs assessment and assess partnership opportunities** in order to ensure the utility of forming a network. The assessment could be a rapid one if getting started quickly is important to achieving short-term aims. It should seek to understand the conflict contexts and the roles that facilitators play (or potentially could play) in them, in addition to the actual or potential challenges faced by facilitators. A support organization should examine the facilitation skill levels and experience of potential trainees, as well as their interest in serving as facilitators and their availability to do so. Existing facilitator networks, along with existing efforts to build facilitator capacity and form facilitator networks, should be identified—in particular locally led efforts that may be less visible to external actors. This step ensures that the support organization's own efforts can reinforce, rather than duplicate, existing initiatives and capacity.

The second recommendation is to **plan for fluctuations in levels of stability, both in a country and in the support organization itself**. At different times and in different regions, countries will experience advances and setbacks in their progress toward peace. These fluctuations will affect facilitators' access to conflict areas and will also increase and decrease pressures on their peacebuilding efforts. Support organizations will experience fluctuations due to shifting priorities, shifting funding levels, and reorganizations. Anticipating these will help avoid or compensate for staff departures, gaps in management, and lulls in investment, as well as fluctuations in performance and programmatic

value. When there are changes in staff, support organizations should prioritize planning for a smooth handoff of staff responsibilities and, if necessary, of the network's management.

FORMAL OR INFORMAL NETWORKS

Networks supported by USIP or other organizations were referred to in the meta-review as either “formal” networks or “informal” or “loose” networks, primarily based on their access to funding, their structure, and the capacity-building and network offerings they provided for their members. Whether a support organization wanted to invest in a formal or informal network often depended on the staff time and financial resources it had to dedicate to a network.

As defined in the meta-review, formal networks have a number of distinguishing features considered crucial in ensuring consistent follow-up and coordination, ownership by members, and clearly defined roles and responsibilities across the stakeholders of a network:

- A funded secretariat or coordinating body has been established. (Although informal or loose networks often have coordinators or coordinating bodies, those roles are not funded.)
- Members are directly involved in developing the mission, vision, strategic plan, work plan, and/or bylaws.
- Members are directly involved in establishing membership criteria and in selecting and recruiting members.
- The network leadership has created a memorandum of understanding between the network and its members.

The meta-review suggested (but could not definitively conclude) that formal networks might be better equipped to mitigate larger conflicts because of their robust organizational structures, their more systematic approaches to building member capacity and designing multi-facilitator efforts, and their access to

resources sufficient to sustain prolonged engagement. The support and legitimacy conferred by membership in a formal network can also allow a facilitator to train more people—and more influential people, such as government officials—in conflict mitigation techniques.

However, though formal networks are associated with higher levels of investment and greater support from external actors, these benefits come with potential downsides. For example, formal networks create high expectations—that is, they may raise participants' expectations of receiving paid work or of continuing programming after the life cycle of a funded initiative or project. They require more momentum and higher levels of engagement from support organizations than informal networks, which can be difficult to maintain. As with informal networks, members will stay involved only if they believe that the benefits of doing so outweigh the costs, meaning that networks must be able to consistently provide value to members, especially as they mature as facilitators. Formal networks also require long-term commitments that may pose a challenge to members, who will be expected to support an institution as it develops its governance structure, rules, and administrative procedures and becomes self-sustaining. Given that many members are established facilitators, substantial time commitments can detract from important peacebuilding work taking place outside the network.

Two recommendations are relevant for supporting institutions pondering whether to foster a formal or an informal facilitator network. First, **the decision should be guided by the ultimate purpose of the network** and based on a rigorous needs assessment. The networks considered in the meta-review point to the potential benefits of creating an informal network at the outset, and waiting until its value has been clearly demonstrated to members and stakeholders before assessing the viability of moving toward a more formalized structure.¹² Second, **organizations should invest in a formal facilitator network only if they are willing and able to make a long-term commitment** of staff and financial resources to the network.

The ability to attract members who could have a positive impact on other members and the network as a whole—by committing to collaboration and taking personal responsibility for the health of the network—was seen as vital to creating viable and sustainable networks.

MEMBER SELECTION

Member selection is a critical step in the creation of any network. Most of the networks assessed sought to recruit individuals who already had conflict management experience, with the goal of further honing their skills and making them more effective in conflict interventions. The ability to attract members who could have a positive impact on other members and the network as a whole—by committing to collaboration and taking personal responsibility for the health of the network—was seen as vital to creating viable and sustainable networks. These findings align quite closely with the broader literature on social networks.¹³ Without motivated individuals who have an interest in actively engaging with other members and strengthening links across all nodes in the structure, networks can quickly fragment or collapse. Recognizing such individuals at the selection stage is difficult, however, and, in any case, members' degree of commitment and interest is likely to vary over time, reflecting shifting perceptions of the value of membership.

The meta-review found that a diverse membership—with a range of skill sets and demographic characteristics—enhanced a network's ability to respond to diverse conflicts in its country. This enhancement could happen indirectly through peer learning and peer mentoring among members, resulting in increased knowledge and improved practices within a network. It could also occur more directly, through the creation of facilitation teams with different skill sets and identity affiliations that strengthen the response to complex conflicts.

This finding is echoed in USIP's broader experience.¹⁴ Having demographically diverse memberships allowed networks to field teams of facilitators who had firsthand knowledge of a conflict context and could thus more easily gain the trust and respect of stakeholders in a

conflict. Facilitators who came from the same regions where a network was active and from the same ethnic and religious group as stakeholders in the conflict were more likely to be effective than others.

However, the meta-review also identified contexts where diversity was perceived as an obstacle to the effective functioning of networks. In some cases, the diversity of backgrounds and skill sets made it more difficult to create network cohesion. Furthermore, geographical diversity was found to be a potential challenge for the management of networks that emphasize frequent communication, collaboration, and other forms of member engagement.

Three recommendations are relevant for networks' selection of members. First, it is important to **create universal facilitator selection criteria** that can be adapted to context, and use them for recruitment and regular assessment of facilitators' skills and commitment. Second, it is important to **select facilitators who are committed to participating in a network, are well-respected in their communities, and have high emotional IQs**. Some of these characteristics will become apparent only over time, so networks should spend time vetting potential members and incorporate new members gradually. Third, as suggested above, it is important to **select a group of facilitators who are diverse in their backgrounds, skills, and experience**. Diversity within a network better positions facilitators to convene and work with diverse groups of people. However, potential risks involved in bringing together a diverse group need to be identified and addressed in the network design and monitored in an ongoing fashion. Network members need to be able to promote reconciliation and model relationships across divides when members are drawn from groups that are in conflict.



Young people gather around candles in Tunis on January 22, 2011, during three days of mourning for those who died in protests that led to the ousting of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. (Photo by Christophe Ena/AP)

DEVELOPMENT OF PEACEBUILDING SKILLS

Increasing peacebuilding capacity was the core motivation of all facilitator networks assessed in the meta-review. The emphasis was on building members' capacity to facilitate dialogues, but there was also acknowledgement that other skills, such as project management, were needed for members to effectively plan, design, and implement projects.

Trainings that were particularly successful in transferring knowledge tailored their curriculum to the local context and effectively adapted trainings over time as the context changed. For example, one USIP network, because of low literacy levels among the communities it worked with, relied heavily on acting in the training.

Another critical element identified in the review as well as the broader literature was the practical application of

skills.¹⁵ In some networks, the trainings became increasingly relevant to ongoing conflicts and came to focus heavily on real conflict scenarios. Opportunities to “learn by doing” helped facilitators sharpen their skills in the real world while working to achieve peacebuilding objectives.

In most of the networks assessed, members were offered opportunities to practice their new skills—either by replicating the training they had received or by facilitating local-level conflicts—with the support of small grants. These opportunities were considered critical to bridging the “knowing-doing” gap that often occurs in projects focused exclusively on capacity building. However, in circumstances where funding is limited, this approach can foment competition between facilitators unless funding is disbursed transparently and equitably. For example, the Nigerian Network of Facilitators—a USIP network established in 2018, too late to be included in the

meta-review—ensures that all facilitators have access to some funding by encouraging small teams of facilitators to plan and implement projects together.

Three recommendations are relevant for networks' development of peacebuilding skills. First, as recommended by adult-learning theorists, **capacity building should center on applied exercises and context-relevant scenarios to ensure skills transfer**.¹⁶ Second, **networks should take a learning-by-doing approach**; they should complement training with opportunities to practice skills outside the classroom and provide ongoing coaching and mentoring to help facilitators internalize new learning and gain practical experience.¹⁷ This step will also help the support organization assess which individuals have the capability, willingness, natural aptitude, and energy required to be effective facilitators, and determine what roles they should play within the network. Finally, **members should be offered sufficient resources to support their conflict mitigation initiatives and training**, though care should be taken to ensure that distribution of small grants does not create competition among network members.

RESOURCES AND MANAGEMENT

The meta-review found that a healthy network requires a sustainable, long-term supply of sufficient human and financial resources to support its operations. A secretariat or other management or coordination structure is crucial; as a Network of Iraqi Facilitators member explained, "The NIF is sustainable only because of Sanad and its involvement. . . . Without Sanad, [volunteers] will have nothing that keeps them connected, updated, supported, or funded." Networks must also have access to sufficient numbers of motivated facilitators from diverse backgrounds and with relevant experience and expertise (gained either before or through their network engagement). Finally, networks must have funding to cover the costs of convening members and providing learning-by-doing training opportunities. The extent of a network's activities should be calibrated to match the resources available from members, the support organization, and other available sources.

As is typical for peacebuilding efforts, only one of the assessed networks reported consistently having the resources it needed to support its operations. These resources included sufficient funding, a secretariat to manage and coordinate the network, and access to sufficient numbers of experienced facilitators with diverse expertise. As a result, it was also the only network that contributed to mitigating a notable number of subnational conflicts. The four other networks lacked sufficient funding and adequate coordination; they remained informal or loose, and their members focused on smaller conflicts—or on their work outside the networks. Overall these networks were perceived to be less effective.

Five recommendations are relevant for networks' resources and management.

First, **a network's scope should be limited to one or a small number of provinces**, at least in the beginning. Keeping the geographic focus narrow can help ensure that the support organization has sufficient resources to support the network.

Second, wherever possible, **a support organization should make a long-term commitment to the development of a network**; such a commitment demands strategic patience and a reliable source of funding for the support organization itself.

Third, if the support organization cannot make a long-term commitment of staff and financial resources, then it should, at least initially, **limit its efforts to building facilitator capacity through training and mentoring**.

Fourth, the **establishment of a strong network secretariat should be prioritized**. This secretariat can be part of a support organization's local office, where experienced national staff are empowered to make decisions or are led by a strong local partner organization empowered to make decisions and assisted by the support organization's local office. The secretariat should be familiar with the local context, up to date regarding the network's

The benefits of joining and belonging to a network need to outweigh the costs in order to build commitment and buy-in. Achieving that initial commitment does not imply that it will be constant. As members mature as facilitators, what initially attracted them to the network may no longer be salient.

and the facilitators' interests and concerns, and able to maintain regular communication with the network. The secretariat should also have the time and resources required to support the network and should not be distracted by too many other responsibilities.

Fifth, the **secretariat should have its own fundraising strategy, should seek funding from diverse sources to support its work and the work of the network**, and should also aim to increase the network's visibility. The support organization should help the secretariat survive until it is able to stand on its own.

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT AND NETWORK VALUE

Maintaining member engagement depends on a network's capacity for joint value creation. The meta-review found that a sense of common purpose among members was critical to their continued commitment to their network.¹⁸ One NIF facilitator said, "When we worked as a team, we were more effective and more productive, especially when Sanad and USIP were there to support."

In a few cases, individuals within a network worked together to achieve shared goals, while in other cases, networks were made up of homogeneous coalitions working effectively together, but with limited connection between the subgroups. Diversity in expertise, motivations for joining, and geography were mentioned as reasons why some networks turned into sets of homogenous coalitions. Members of such networks had very different motivations and needs and tended to be drawn to like-minded individuals. Another challenge to member engagement was geographical dispersion, which severely limited the opportunities for members to meet in person—although this problem was mitigated for networks with adequate communications infrastructure, whose members could interact online.

A critical factor in sparking the initial interest of potential members and sustaining this over time is the perception of the network's value. Simply stated, the benefits of joining and belonging to a network need to outweigh the costs in order to build commitment and buy-in. Achieving that initial commitment does not imply that it will be constant. As members mature as facilitators, what initially attracted them to the network may no longer be salient. According to interviews and surveys with facilitators, the perceived benefits of membership included increased capacity, or the ability to achieve more as members of a network than as individuals; the ability to learn from peers; access to facilitation opportunities and opportunities to collaborate on peacebuilding; the support provided by the network; and the status associated with membership. The main perceived costs were the time and effort required to stay actively engaged in a network. Some facilitators faced significant competing demands from other organizations, networks, and work engagements, limiting their ability to engage with and, ultimately, value the network.

Members also considered it important that they, and not the support organizations, drove decisions around the network's design and structure. Facilitators seemed to value their network more highly when they had a sense of ownership, which they developed by determining the network's vision, mission, strategic plan, and tactics for achieving strategic objectives. Moreover, members indicated the importance of regularly updating the strategic direction of a network, both to ensure that the strategy responded to the changing context and to build a sense of ownership among new members.

A network's perceived value was also linked to a sense of shared purpose among members, which tended to develop when members worked together on a narrow set of issues. According to the meta-review, conflict

mitigation efforts that included a number of facilitators within a network created a shared purpose among the subset of members engaged, and this sense of shared purpose remained beyond the lifespan of a specific initiative. This finding is illustrated in box 1 on page 6 describing the NIF's efforts in Mahmoudiya, and echoed in the observation by a SPADO member about the Pakistani network: "The network members had developed a strong bond and friendships among themselves. They remain in touch with each other. Many of them are committed to peacebuilding."

Another pivotal factor to bolster member engagement was compensation for time and effort spent furthering the objectives of a network. In some networks, compensation of members was an explicit consideration in the project design and continually revisited. In other networks, compensation was not considered at the design phase and was instead incorporated over time in an ad hoc fashion. Most facilitators selected to be part of these networks already worked in a peacebuilding function, either as part of a civil society organization or as freelancers. For such individuals, conducting pro bono work on behalf of a facilitator network was neither sustainable nor worthwhile.

There are five recommendations related to member engagement and perception of network value, which as a group point to the benefits of establishing formal rather than informal networks to maximize member engagement and network value.

First, **a support organization should work with members to determine the network's vision, mission, and objectives**, as well as the approaches it will use to achieve its objectives. Members should update

these elements regularly (or when there is a significant change or expansion in network membership) and should agree on annual work plans.


Second, members should also **agree on the roles and responsibilities of the support organization, the secretariat or coordinator, and the members**. These should be captured in a memorandum of understanding that all sign to demonstrate their agreement and their commitment to the network.

Third, the support organization and members should **establish processes for regularly assessing the facilitators' and network's effectiveness**, as well as the appropriateness of the approaches they are using to inform strategic decision-making regarding the network's direction.

Fourth, the support organization and/or the network secretariat should **maintain continual engagement with network members**, combining in-person events with virtual or remote contact (e.g., listservs, WhatsApp groups, newsletters) and finding ways to help those without internet access communicate with the group. This step will strengthen the network's sense of identity and facilitators' sense of belonging to it, thus laying the groundwork for its sustainability. The support organization and/or secretariat should ensure that all members feel included in the group, invest in team building, and seek to resolve instances of internal conflict.

Fifth, **network managers should acknowledge the costs—time and resources—that members invest** in the conflict mitigation initiatives they undertake as part of the network, **and should support these initiatives and compensate members accordingly**.

Conclusion: Effective Peacebuilding



This report has focused, in large part, on how to design, manage, and sustain facilitator networks. But a couple of key questions remain: Beyond creating and maintaining facilitator networks, what types of peacebuilding impact have the networks been able to achieve? What has been the peacebuilding return on these investments? Answers to these questions get to the core of whether these networks are valuable endeavors, or if scarce resources are better spent elsewhere.

Based on case studies, the results of other evaluative efforts, and self-reported successes and failures by facilitators, the meta-review concludes that *it depends*. For many peacebuilding initiatives, the networks' efforts succeeded in resolving or preventing conflicts, or at least contributed to progress toward those goals. In some cases, resolving a conflict involved setting up a peace committee, working group, or club as a structure that could mitigate conflict going forward. In other cases, facilitators or mediators observed shifts in attitudes that favored peace. For still other peacebuilding initiatives, the problem was not resolved, or it was too early to tell how, if at all, conflict mitigation efforts would have an impact. And in a few cases, dialogue processes were suspended, or a resolution did not last, either because violent extremists arrived in the local area or cycles of violence were renewed.

The meta-review also pointed to significant variation in the success of interventions within networks. Every facilitator network was effective in some initiatives but less so in others. This finding partly reflects the varying problem sets and conflict contexts that each network tackled, some of which the networks were ill-suited to handle.

While the impacts of conflict mitigation initiatives have varied, it is still possible to identify several factors likely to maximize the effectiveness of these efforts. The study revealed that what makes for a healthy network overlaps in many respects with success factors for specific peacebuilding interventions.

Multifaceted skill sets within a facilitator team.

Facilitator teams need skills not in just one area but in several that together span the dialogue process, from conflict analysis, to design of a peacebuilding initiative, to implementation. Ensuring members could fill different conflict mitigation roles helped networks respond to conflicts effectively. Trained researchers who could conduct rigorous conflict analysis, individuals with deep knowledge of local dynamics, actors who could translate the research into feasible dialogue designs, individuals adept at project management, and talented facilitators capable of convening stakeholders for constructive dialogues because of their credibility in a conflict context—all were important to impactful peacebuilding initiatives. In some networks, as a result of intentional recruitment, network members identified themselves as either researchers, trainers, or facilitators. In most networks, however, members typically played multiple roles. The meta-review suggested that as networks mature, moving toward more specialization may be valuable.

Facilitators with local knowledge and a good reputation among stakeholders. Effective initiatives depend on facilitators who possess knowledge of local dynamics and actors, and who are well respected—or quickly able to earn respect—within the community



Sunni tribal leaders attend the graduation ceremony of Sunni tribal volunteers in Habaniyah, west of Baghdad, on June 17, 2015. (Photo by Khalid Mohammed/AP)

in which a peacebuilding intervention takes place. In most contexts, that implies the need to create facilitator teams made up of individuals whose backgrounds mirror the various groups involved in a conflict.

Clarity of roles and responsibilities among the network, its secretariat, network members, and the support organization. Clarity about the different roles played by the institutions and individuals involved in the network is critical not only to ensure effective planning and implementation, but also to avoid tensions among facilitators or between facilitators and support organizations during the implementation of the peacebuilding initiative.

Careful conflict assessment. No network will be able to facilitate every type of conflict, and the most effective interventions are launched after a careful assessment determines that the network has the capacity to tackle

the conflict. If gaps in capacity are found, networks should either collaborate with actors outside the network or decide against intervention entirely.

A process to achieve shared objectives. Effective peacebuilding initiatives specify how human and financial resources should be utilized to achieve a set of shared objectives. Doing so helps ensure that the support organization, the network, and the facilitators are all pulling in the same direction for a given peacebuilding initiative.

Long-term commitment. For longer-term outcomes, peacebuilding initiatives require support over time; long-standing conflicts can be transformed only with a long-term strategy and a network's sustained commitment. If funders insist on time frames for intervention that are too short to accommodate the often-protracted process of facilitating complex conflicts, the network

needs to negotiate with them. It may also have to seek other funding sources or, as a last resort, rely on its secretariat and facilitators to invest their own time and resources so the initiative can continue long enough to have an enduring impact on the conflict.

Compensation. Inadequate compensation may not negatively affect a peacebuilding initiative, but it can undermine the effectiveness of a network and may ultimately interfere with an initiative's success. A lack of compensation and support for individual facilitators can fuel significant tensions between facilitators and network management both during the implementation of specific conflict mitigation efforts and more broadly within networks.

Drawing on the experiences of five USIP-supported facilitator networks and several others, as well as a literature review, this report has identified key factors that contribute to a facilitator network's effectiveness and the success of its peacebuilding interventions. Critical among these is a

support organization's long-term commitment of resources and technical assistance, a well-resourced and nationally based network management structure with decision-making authority and relevant expertise, and a membership of facilitators with diverse backgrounds and expertise who are committed to working together to mitigate conflicts and/or train others in conflict mitigation skills.

As more emphasis is placed on the role of national and local efforts in peacebuilding, support organizations may increasingly look for opportunities to bolster national and local facilitator networks. Changes in their strategies and/or budget limitations, however, may limit the ability of support organizations to provide long-term resources and technical assistance. Having clarity about these limitations from the beginning should help support organizations establish realistic expectations, so that all involved can design a network that successfully operates with the resources and technical assistance available.

Notes

In addition to the USIP reviewers, the authors would like to thank the team that, working alongside Carlisle Levine (BLE Solutions, United States), conducted the meta-review on which this report is based. The following team members led the meta-review in their respective countries: Dlawer Ala'Aldeen (Middle East Research Institute, Iraq), Eya Jrad (independent, Tunisia), Diana Maria Montealegre (independent, Colombia), Hassan Nasir Mirbahar (independent, Pakistan), and Mohammed Ehsan Zia (Tadbeer Consultancy and Research Organization, Afghanistan, at the time of the review). Dlawer Ala'Aldeen, Eya Jrad, and Diana Maria Montealegre also conducted brief case studies. Vanessa Corlazzoli (independent, Canada) undertook the literature review. Together, the meta-review team analyzed data across the five focus countries and synthesized their findings to produce the findings and most of the recommendations shared in this report. The co-authors alone are responsible for the report's content.

1. See, for instance, John W. Burton, *Conflict and Communication* (New York: Free Press, 1969); Leonard W. Doob, ed., *Resolving Conflict in Africa: The Fermida Workshop* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), 105–107; and Leonard W. Doob and William J. Foltz, “The Belfast Workshop: An Application of Group Techniques to a Destructive Conflict,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 17, no. 3 (1973): 489–512.
2. See Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, *Dialogue in Peacebuilding: Understanding Different Perspectives*, Development Dialogue #64 (Uppsala, Sweden: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 2019), 12, www.daghammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/dd64-dialogue-web1.pdf.
3. The team assembled by BLE Solutions had seven members. Two were based in the United States (Carlisle J. Levine, BLE Solutions, and Vanessa Corlazzoli, independent), and one each was based in Iraq (Dlawer Ala'Aldeen, Middle East Research Institute), Tunisia (Eya Jrad, independent), Colombia (Diana Maria Montealegre, independent), Pakistan (Hassan Nasir Mirbahar, independent), and Afghanistan (Mohammed Ehsan Zia, Tadbeer Consultancy and Research Organization at the time of the review).
4. The final version of the meta-review, written by Carlisle Levine et al. and entitled “USIP Facilitator Network Meta Evaluation,” was provided to USIP as an internal report in October 2019. It should be noted that the meta-review faced a number of obstacles, including limited available documentation, difficulties identifying facilitators to interview in some contexts, the need for staff and facilitators to remember events that happened years ago, and security considerations that restricted travel to some locations where USIP-trained facilitators were operating. These obstacles highlight the value of creating an efficient monitoring and evaluation process early in a network's development and establishing effective storage and management systems for the data collected.
5. This quotation and the others included in this report are from facilitator interviews and surveys conducted as part of the meta-review.
6. Lesley Connolly and Laura Powers, eds., *Local Networks for Peace: Lessons from Community-Led Peacebuilding* (New York: International Peace Institute, 2018), 6.
7. For more detail on USIP's Dispute Resolution Councils in Afghanistan, see Noah Coburn, “Informal Justice and the International Community in Afghanistan,” *Peaceworks* no. 84, United States Institute of Peace, April 2013, 47–51, www.usip.org/publications/2013/04/informal-justice-and-international-community-afghanistan.
8. These details are from an internal report, “Training of Governors' Office Staffs and Micro-Grant Funding Support Using the Network of Afghan Facilitators,” prepared for the US Agency for International Development (USAID) by USIP's Academy for International Conflict Management and Peacebuilding and Center for Conflict Management, 2010–11, 3.
9. See Roxanne Krystalli, “The Colombian Peace Agreement Has a Big Emphasis on the Lives of Women. Here's How,” *Washington Post*, August 19, 2016, www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/08/19/the-colombian-peace-agreement-gives-gender-issues-a-central-role-heres-why-this-is-so-important/.
10. Virginia Bouvier, “Evaluation of Results and Impact of ‘Strengthening Women Mediators in the Colombian Armed Conflict,’” Final Report to USAID, November 4, 2015, 2 [interagency report, internal].
11. A related issue is the possibility that international actors will inflate their importance in promoting peace and consequently prove counterproductive to local efforts; see Severine Autesserre, “International Peacebuilding and Local Success: Assumptions and Effectiveness,” *International Studies Review* 19, no. 1 (2017): 114–32, www.severineautesserre.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/ISRSeverine.pdf.

12. This point is also emphasized in other studies. See, for instance, Peter Plastrik, Madeleine Taylor, and John Cleveland, *Connecting to Change the World: Harnessing the Power of Networks for Social Impact* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2014), chapter 2. This study also identifies “another reason to hold off on formalizing governance: the purpose of network governance is not to tell members what to do, but to enable them to do what they want to do—and it usually takes some time before members know what they want to do together” (65).
13. Peter Plastrik and Madeleine Taylor, *NET GAINS: A Handbook for Network Builders Seeking Social Change*, version 1.0, 2006, 45–46, <https://networkimpact.org/downloads/NetGainsHandbookVersion1.pdf>.
14. See USIP, “Designing Community-Based Dialogue,” chapter 3.2, USIP Global Campus, www.usip.org/academy/catalog/designing-community-based-dialogue, for more on the importance of creating teams of facilitators representing relevant identity groups, and on how facilitators can model effective communication across these groups.
15. See, for instance, PeaceTraining.eu, *The Peace Training Handbook*, 2018, 45–46, www.peacetraining.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/The-Peace-Training-Handbook.pdf.
16. See, for example, David Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, 2nd edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2014).
17. This is also emphasized in other fields, such as business studies. See, for example, Charles Jennings and Jérôme Wargnier, “Effective Learning with 70:20:10: The New Frontier for the Extended Enterprise,” Cross-Knowledge White Paper, 2011, 13–14, https://alberonpartners.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Alberon_Wargnier_2011-70-20-10_vEN.pdf, which discusses the relative ineffectiveness of training without mentoring and real-life application.
18. This finding is echoed by other studies. See, for example, Heather Creech, “Form Follows Function: Management and Governance of a Formal Knowledge Network,” International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2001, www.iisd.org/publications/form-follows-function-management-and-governance-knowledge-networks.

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Since 2003, the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) has identified and strengthened the capacities of facilitators to help resolve conflicts and train others in conflict mitigation skills, in some cases supporting the construction of facilitator networks. This report distills findings from a meta-review USIP commissioned, evaluating its efforts to foster facilitator networks in five countries—Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Pakistan, and Tunisia—and includes brief case studies of specific initiatives led by facilitators. It provides key considerations and recommendations for support organizations on how to design, manage, and sustain facilitator networks, plus factors found to increase networks' effectiveness.

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