FRONTLINE NEGOTIATIONS

CENTRE OF COMPETENCE ON HUMANITARIAN NEGOTIATION

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THEMATIC REPORT

# Community-led negotiations

In partnership with

HPG Humanitarian Policy Group

ODI Global

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This research was commissioned by the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation (CCHN) and undertaken by ODI, with both organisations contributing to its development.

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## THE CENTRE OF COMPETENCE ON HUMANITARIAN NEGOTIATION

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It was established in 2016 to provide concrete opportunities for frontline humanitarian negotiators to share and analyse their negotiation practices, to build practitioners' capacity to address recurring challenges and dilemmas in humanitarian negotiation, and to foster peer-to-peer exchange across agencies and regions in a safe environment. Its core objectives are:

- To foster a community of professionals engaged in frontline humanitarian negotiations.
- To promote critical reflection, learning and exchanges among peers within this community.
- To develop a stronger analytical framework and greater capacity for effective practice.

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# Executive summary

**It is now recognised that communities[1] are not just victims or passive actors in armed conflict. They have agency and, in many cases, through direct dialogue they have influenced authorities and armed actors in favour of restraint, or to allow access to the resources and services communities need for their survival (Kaplan, 2013; Arjona, 2015; Yousuf, 2015; ICRC, 2018; Kothari and Meredith, 2023, Davies et al., 2024b). In fact, local communities may exercise considerable influence over armed actors at the local level (Kakar, 2019; Barbelet et al., 2023: 8; Davies et al., 2024a; 2024b).**

Communities around the world regularly engage in dialogue with authorities and armed actors on issues directly related to their daily lives as a matter of necessity, strategic choice, or as a result of external pressure by humanitarian actors or governments without any support, nor a regard for the additional security risks they might face. Communities have influenced the timing and location of fighting, the ability to harvest crops and engage in trade, pushed back on forced recruitment, and secured mine removal, safe passage and evacuations, as well as local ceasefires and 'peace zones' (Kaplan, 2013; Yousuf, 2015; Suarez, 2017; ICRC, 2018; Jackson, 2021; Shire, 2021; Davies et al., 2024b; Centre on Armed Groups, 2024).

As the international humanitarian community continues to face access challenges and now a funding crisis, localisation has garnered more attention, including in relation to community-led dialogue and negotiation. However, in light of 'do no harm' principles and to avoid transference of risk, international humanitarian actors must understand better community negotiation practices and how their interventions might hinder or strengthen these efforts.

There is a wealth of evidence documenting examples of community negotiation with a specific focus on negotiator selection, tactics, and what influences negotiation outcomes. There is also documentation of practice, and analysis of potential actions as to how to support these engagements. However, there is a gap in understanding the granularity of the dialogue process that community negotiators undertake, and how that informs appropriate ways to support community efforts.

As with international humanitarian negotiators, community negotiators learn from their experiences as to what works with different interlocutors at different levels. While more fluid, less structured and documented than humanitarian negotiations, community approaches often rely on traditional approaches or have developed their own dialogue processes. In some cases, community dialogue processes have benefited from generous international humanitarian and peacebuilding support, principally through trainings.

While not always the case, available literature and interviews indicate that, by and large, community negotiators instinctively prepare for dialogue in a similar fashion as to what is set out in the Naivasha Grid[2] (e.g., context analysis, analyse interests and motives of counterpart, analyse network of influence, develop

[1] For the purposes of this study, communities are understood as 'built on shared norms, values, customs and traditions, [and] included those linked to religion or spirituality. They are often linked to ethnic and sub-ethnic groups. While many communities are linked to geographic areas, people can move across different areas or international borders and still belong to the same community' (Davies et al., 2024b: 16).
[2] The Naivasha Grid is a framework crated by the CCHN and used to structure the preparation of a humanitarian team when it comes to humanitarian negotiations in the field.

a tactical plan, and identify own priorities and objectives), although the process is organic rather than structured.

The main differences between community dialogue and the Naivasha Grid, besides following a less formulaic process, is that they do not carry out the 'Design scenario and bottom line', nor is there a mandator's role. The 'bottom line' for communities is that dialogue must lead to enhanced safety of the community, even to the detriment of some individuals, and 'red lines' relate more to relationships between members of the negotiation team or to sharing information with outsiders rather than dialogue outcomes themselves.

What quickly became apparent during the research is that the type of support welcomed by community negotiators varies greatly by context. Across the board, skills training (i.e., communication, rapport building, negotiation techniques, problem solving, etc.) and relevant legal frameworks such as international humanitarian law (IHL) and, in one case, context-relevant geopolitics, are highly sought after, although the types of training(s) and capacity support they want depend on the negotiators and the context. Equally important are opportunities for mentoring and peer exchange (again, something all negotiators wanted) as well as introductions to decision-makers in cases where they have no connections. Financial and/or facilitation support to cover travel costs and other logistical issues is also widely welcome and necessary. These support opportunities are also reflected in the available literature.

Any plans for supporting community-led negotiation efforts must be undertaken only after conducting a conflict-sensitivity analysis that includes an analysis of formal and informal community power dynamics and practices in how they govern and organise themselves (Barbelet et al., 2023). An assessment must be made of the community's existing practices, including an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Only after taking these steps might efforts to support community-led negotiations be considered and only undertaken according to the community's/negotiators' expressed needs, with the view to reinforcing their efforts. It is not a one-size-fits-all scenario.

# Contents

# Purpose and methodology

The Humanitarian Policy Group at ODI Global was contracted by the Centre for Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation (CCHN) to conduct research on community-led negotiations, particularly the processes that community negotiators undertake to engage with authorities and armed actors for humanitarian access and protection. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What triggers the decision to engage in direct negotiations?
- How do community negotiators prepare for such engagements?
- What is the process taken in negotiations?
- What are their risk-mitigation strategies?
- What are the tactics and strategies used in the negotiation process?
- What factors influence the outcome of negotiations?
- What follow-up actions take place once an agreement is reached?
- What type of support do community negotiators most need?

The objective of the research is to analyse the community negotiation practices, specifically within the framework of the Naivasha Grid, and to identify how international humanitarian actors can better support these community-led efforts. The recommendations are to inform future actions of the CCHN and its community of practice, as well as wider relevant humanitarian actors.

The research built upon an earlier unpublished HPG literature review (Davies et al., 2022), as well as the multi-year research on community engagement, protection and peace (Davies et al., 2024b). This was complemented by an updated literature review, alongside 32 online interviews and focus group discussions between November 2024 and January 2025, with 7 community negotiators and 25 expert stakeholders including local and international humanitarian staff (19), academics (3), NGO staff (2), and journalists (1) who have knowledge of community negotiation practices in Colombia, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), El Salvador, Ethiopia, India, Iraq, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, Somalia, and Yemen. One limitation of the research was the difficulty to reach community negotiators directly, given no travel budget, local security conditions, and language limitations. This meant that interviews were conducted primarily with humanitarian staff supporting community-led negotiations and thus were heavily influenced by their own perceptions and biases.

It is important to understand that the interviews provided a snapshot of what community negotiations look like and were not meant to provide an in-depth study on community negotiation practices in any given country. The interviews were particularly useful in digging deeper into gaps in the available literature in terms of negotiation triggers, negotiation preparation, and the negotiation process. It is important to note that communities are not homogeneous, and dialogue practices within and between communities and cultures are diverse, and change through time. However, where possible, trends have been identified and analysed.

Importantly, while this research was commissioned to study community-led negotiations, the actions of communities is often wider than solely transactional negotiations, so the term ‘dialogue’ will be adopted where possible.

# Dialogue triggers

The choice to engage in dialogue lies with the communities themselves or with representatives who engage on their behalf and are dependent upon their existing relationship with decision-makers within the relevant authorities and/or armed actors, the likelihood of success, and the risks to safety and security for the negotiator and community. Findings across the research found that three factors drive triggers for dialogue.

The first factor is **necessity**. For many communities, dialogue is driven by necessity, so it is not perceived as a choice. It is part of what they do all the time in their daily interaction with authorities and armed actors as a result of living in the same space (Barbelet et al., 2023; academic, INGO, community negotiator interviews). One humanitarian worker noted that communities may not even recognise that what they do in these circumstances is dialogue.

Then, there is **strategic choice**. When faced with high risks of violence, coercion and deliberate deprivation, or other grievances (e.g., lack of voice in decisions made on their behalf), local communities may choose, among other self-protection strategies, to engage in direct dialogue with decision-makers to voice their grievances and seek solutions (Kothari and Meredith, 2023; Davies et al., 2024: 26; I/NGO interviews). This is often related to individual cases, for example, a family member detained at a checkpoint (academic, INGO staff, and community negotiator interviews).

Additionally, dialogue may be driven by **external pressure**. For example, a humanitarian organisation may request communities to negotiate access on its behalf. In contrast, the government may request traditional leaders to intercede in inter-communal conflict (UN and academic interviews). Asking communities to intervene in negotiations risks fostering mistrust and endangering the process, especially if the requesting organisation doesn't take into account conflict and community dynamics, including culture (Davies et al., 2024a). According to one humanitarian, when agencies offer assistance in exchange for access, communities will generally agree. They have normalised these encounters without considering them a negotiation or high-stakes situation.

Unfortunately, in these instances, the prompting entity rarely supports community negotiators or considers the additional safety and security risks they may face (INGO interview).

# Selection of negotiator(s)

For the purpose of this research, we defined community negotiator(s) as volunteers who are (self-)selected according to the following two criteria.

First, community negotiators need **the tacit acceptance and trust to act on the individual's or community's behalf/best interest** (Davies et al., 2022; Barbelet et al., 2023; Ruta, 2023; Davies and Mayhew, 2024; Davies et al., 2024). This can include traditional (clan, ethnic or tribal) chiefs, elders, religious or spiritual leaders, judges, businesspeople, or other local authority figures within a given community. Community-based organisations, non-governmental organisation (NGO) activists, as well as women with maternal authority or youth leaders perceived as role models may also play an important role, including in leading informal engagement with combatants (Barter, 2012; Barbelet et al., 2023; Davies and Mayhew, 2024; Davies et al., 2024; Centre on Armed Groups, 2024). For example, in Yemen, Hadi Jumman, a peace activist and social development specialist well known for his efforts to help people through his humanitarian work, was approached by community members to seek the return of the bodies of the deceased combatants to families as the frontlines shifted. To do this, he had to seek cooperation from all parties to the conflict. Word got out after his first successful mission, and now he is regularly approached to collect the dead (Reysner, n.d.).

Second, community negotiators have **specific skills and characteristics that they embody**. For example:

- They are knowledgeable and experienced. They know the people they are engaging with, how to 'play the game', and, therefore, the best strategy to employ (interview; Cismas et al., 2023; Davies and Mayhew, 2024).
- Their gender works in their favour. While often male community leaders lead high-level negotiations, in some cases, a woman might be preferable as they can be perceived as less of a threat to the armed actor, particularly in contexts where women do not traditionally participate in hostilities (Barbelet et al., 2023; Cismas et al., 2023; Davies et al., 2024b).
- They have existing relationships, influence, or leverage over the power holder (Barbelet et al., 2023; Ruta, 2023; Davies et al., 2024b).
- They are perceived as neutral or apolitical (Davies et al., 2024b).

Communities are highly strategic and selective in who represents them in a dialogue with the authorities or armed actors (see Box 1). Their choice is influenced by the interlocutor, the hierarchy, and the topic of discussion. Negotiations can be led by one person or a delegation, depending on the context and local practices. According to interviewees, delegation members are selected based on their influence over the authority/armed actor and their capacity to represent different interest groups, and can even include those most impacted, for example, the victims or their family members (I/NGO and community negotiator interviews). In some cases, committees have formed to collectively negotiate, either indigenously or at the instigation of international NGOs (INGOs) such as CIVIC, Nonviolent Peaceforce, or Oxfam (Linning, 2023; 2024a; 2024b; Centre on Armed Groups, 2024). For example, in Sudan, the Mother Committee in West Darfur is a coalition of tribal leaders, civil society actors, and local figures indigenously formed that seeks to resolve conflict between tribal and armed groups, while also securing the harvest (Centre on Armed Groups, 2024).

Multiple negotiators represent the community's interests. Interviews confirm that the person leading the negotiations can change (sometimes in the middle of the dialogue) depending on the topic, the counterpart, or if the community feels the negotiator misbehaved or did not present well the community's request (INGO interviews).

**Box 1: Nigeria**

Before an individual or small group brings an issue to the government, communities in Nigeria start by seeking other members' buy-in. Once the group size is considered sufficient, community members select their representatives based on education level, city experience, and connections to the relevant authority/armed actor. Representatives will usually speak the same language as the government's decision-maker and are accustomed to public speaking. In their selection, communities also factor in their representative's capacity to draft speaking points, attribute tasks and establish supporting roles. They then seek to meet with the relevant government body at the community level. If they receive a negative response, they escalate the issue in the chain of command, sometimes to the federal level. At every stage, communities know who should represent them and persuade their representatives to negotiate on their behalf (INGO interviews).

# Dialogue process

Just like their members' identities, communities are 'diverse, heterogeneous, and continuously shifting,' influenced by internal and external factors (Davies et al., 2024a). Their approach to dialogue is fluid and dynamic, and varies according to the culture, environment, and target group. Community negotiators acquire their skills through 'trial and error', learning what works (and what does not) with different interlocutors. Despite their less structured approach, variances within and across community negotiation practices have distilled into common and identifiable features similar to international humanitarian dialogue processes.

**Situation analysis**. Since community negotiators are rooted in the context, they do not prepare by undertaking a situational analysis, unlike humanitarian negotiators. Rather, they constantly analyse the environment to identify community priorities, assess the likelihood of negotiation success versus risks, and determine the best time for dialogue (South et al., 2012; Suarez, 2017; Mayersen, 2020; Davies et al., 2022; CCHN, 2024b; Davies et al., 2024: 20; NGO interview). According to one negotiator in Northern Ireland, where non-state armed groups (NSAGs) are embedded in the community, the topics discussed during town meetings can indicate where an NSAG stands on a particular issue. To assess how open an armed actor is to dialogue on a specific problem, communities use several techniques, such as family or friendship connections and symbols (Davies et al., 2024a). They will also collect information through consultations with other community members, including victims and their families, before starting any discussion (Barbelet et al., 2023; Davies and Mayhew, 2024; community negotiator and INGO interviews).

**Identifying priorities and objectives**. Communities typically engage in dialogue with those in power, such as authorities, armed groups, and even humanitarian organisations, about issues affecting their daily lives. This includes seeking immediate safety from violence, coercion and deliberate deprivation. This is not to suggest that protection issues, as defined in accordance with international laws, resonate with communities or are their priority (South et al., 2012; Davies et al., 2022). As mentioned by one humanitarian practitioner, committees established by international humanitarian organisations are more likely to address concerns that match the organisation's priorities. The issues of concern should be identified through consultations within the community. The greater a community's social cohesion, the easier it is for them to agree on the objectives and messages they want to convey. However, an issue's immediacy can influence the matters prioritised. Additionally, communities often adopt a "success-risk" approach to determine which concerns to raise (Barbelet et al., 2023).

**Mobilising influencers**. Communities will analyse those in power to understand their motivation, assess their own leverage, and identify which community member can positively influence the dialogue outcomes. They will then seek the influential members' advice and support, often inviting them to accompany the negotiation team to meetings with authorities or armed actors (CCHN, 2024b; INGO interview). In South Sudan, communities would target respected former military figures to speak to government soldiers or chiefs to sit with the politicians. Youth leaders would join the negotiation team in cases where contingents of youth combatants are substantial (Davies et al., 2024a).

**Trust-building**. Communities are constantly preparing for negotiations. They network, position themselves, identify entry points, and ensure communication channels with authorities or armed actors remain open. (Barbelet et al., 2023). As one interviewee explained, relationships cannot be forged in one meeting; instead, they require time to learn about each other (INGO interview). In the Central African Republic (CAR), some communities would purposefully forge familial links with armed groups by marrying their daughters to armed group members. In other cases, generational connections and friendship ties would be utilised as entry points (Barbelet et al., 2023).

**Strategising**. Communities collect and analyse information to determine their tactics (see below). When they receive support from humanitarian actors, such as CIVIC and Oxfam, to organise themselves, communities develop action plans to identify their needs, objectives, and messages, attribute responsibilities (including logistical arrangements), and identify the resources needed. Sometimes, problem-solving trees are used to develop these plans (INGO interviews). In Iraq, humanitarian actors observed that negotiators generally identify their community's needs, decide how to frame the message, and split roles as necessary. For example, one person will introduce who they are, what they've done, and the objective of the meeting, another will explain the problem and how it affects the community, while yet another will present their request (INGO interview).

**Box 2: Families of the Missing**

Families of the missing frequently engage with multiple actors involved in their loved one's search process, including the police, security forces, prosecutors, forensic institutions, local authorities, and national human rights bodies. Families also interact with non-State armed groups, media, international organisations, and community leaders. These conversations are typically uncoordinated and informal, driven by the urgent need to locate their loved ones or understand what happened to them.

These conversations are often deeply personal and emotionally charged, as families advocate for their rights and the dignity of their loved ones. At the heart of their struggle is the right to know what happened, whether in the hope of finding their relatives alive or to mourn with certainty if they have passed. For many, the process is also about seeking recognition and justice, including social rights such as compensation or support from the state, which affirms both the loss endured and the value of the lives taken. In this way, their advocacy is a quest for answers and an affirmation of memory, dignity, and belonging.

Although families of the missing often lack formal negotiation training, they have developed effective preparation strategies through experience, reflection, and exchanges with members of their associations or other families facing similar situations. These practices, though informal, often mirror structured approaches to negotiation and dialogue (CCHN, 2025).

**Contact entry points**. Communities rely on pre-existing relationships (i.e., familial, kinship, social, etc.) to initiate a dialogue with armed actors (Yousuf, 2015; Davies et al., 2024b). In CAR, wives of armed actor members would facilitate contact with their husbands, although they would not be involved in the dialogue for their safety (Barbelet et al., 2023). In other cases, the negotiator will know where to find trusted individuals who can pass messages to set up meetings, as phone calls may be too dangerous due to high levels of surveillance (community negotiator interviews). 'The lack of clear separation between communities and armed actors can mean that the dialogue process is less visible. Dialogue may occur simply when a family member associated with an armed actor visits the family home' (Davies et al., 2024b).

There are also cases where communities have utilised religious observance as entry points for dialogue. In South Sudan, sermons and prayers provide an active audience, while religious days can help create a 'friendly environment' (Davies et al., 2024b). In CAR, religious holidays were used to negotiate with the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique to secure both pauses in violence and access for the delivery of humanitarian aid (Barbelet et al., 2023).

**Meeting location**. The choice of where the dialogue happens is significant. Several factors influence the decision, including where the parties think bias will be mitigated, trust is built, influence is leveraged, and

everyone's safety and security is guaranteed. Negotiators might need to go to the counterpart's territory, home, or office, which can be located within the communities' confines, but could also require significant travel. Negotiating parties may meet in markets and congregating spaces. According to one negotiator in Asia, meetings could occur in liberated areas, the jungle, or outside the country. Keeping in good physical shape, maintaining a low profile and avoiding mobile phones are necessary to avoid surveillance (community negotiator interview). In South Sudan, people would go to the periphery of villages and meet in neutral locations (Davies et al., 2024a). In Northern Ireland, it was considered important for people across divided constituencies to visit one another's to break down stereotypes and build relationships.

Where relevant, community negotiators have utilised traditional practices (see Box 2) and rituals (academic, INGO and community negotiator interviews). For example, a humanitarian reported that in Yemen, negotiators would attend one of the nightly social gatherings for men in the community that would sometimes occur at a commander's house. During the gathering, the negotiator would bring up an issue and seek to find a solution that everyone present would agree with (INGO interview). In South Sudan, some traditions called for sacrificing animals as a way of marking the positive outcome of a process (Davies et al., 2024a).

**Follow-up**. Negotiations may be resolved in one meeting when dealing with a case-specific issue at the local level. However, when a resolution is not reached or an agreement is not implemented immediately, several meetings might be required, including at different hierarchical levels. In one case, a humanitarian staff member interviewed observed how, after a discussion, negotiators would meet to evaluate their performance and how to improve their approach in the future. Continuous dialogue with authorities and armed actors was also highlighted as valuable for providing space to discuss issues as they arose. The Humanitarian Policy Group's research emphasised the importance of maintaining open communication channels, even when tensions and violence escalate or dialogue becomes nearly impossible, as this eases a rapid resumption when conditions allow.

Interviews indicate that international influence is most prevalent in the preparation of a negotiation. The more support and negotiation training community negotiators receive, the more their practice aligns with international negotiation frameworks and concepts, such as the Naivasha Grid. Yet, there are cases where community negotiators do not have enough time to prepare. For example, in Myanmar, a journalist reported that the army could come through a village at any time to forcefully demand porters or human minesweepers. The women village leaders would speak to the military officers to mitigate the potential impact of such demands, for example, by hiding how many men were available for portering (INGO interview).

### Box 3: Colombia

Triana-E et al. (2022: 19) documented an indigenous community's strategy to recover recruited children. When a family reports a case of child recruitment, the indigenous authorities collect the background information on the case. The unarmed indigenous guard then escorts the family to engage in negotiations with the armed group. Usually, the mother explains to the armed group why their child must return to the community. The indigenous authorities and governance structures provide for transportation and food during the negotiations. Community Action Committees and teachers often mediate and dialogue with the armed actor to persuade them to release the children.

## Negotiation strategy and tactics

Communities are often best placed to know what cultural and social currency the authority or armed actors will react to and the arguments that will have the most persuasive power. They strategically adapt their behaviour, dress, messages and advocacy accordingly, thus increasing the chance of positive negotiation outcomes (Baines and Paddon, 2012; Triana-E et al., 2022: 9; Barbelet et al., 2023; Linning, 2024b; Bliesemann de Guevara et al., 2024: 3; Davies and Mayhew, 2024). HPG and other research has found that over time, negotiators gain experience, develop an understanding of the authority or armed group, increase their knowledge of how to 'play the game', and learn what strategies work (Kothari and Meredith, 2023). Persuasion requires both argument and deliberation in order to influence anothers' mindset (Cismas et al., 2023). Different strategies are chosen depending on the threat, the actor, or the issue at hand (Barbelet et al., 2023; Bliesemann de Guevara et al., 2024: 3; Davies and Mayhew, 2024). This research has found a diversity of tactics employed by community negotiators, sometimes simultaneously.

The most common approach is to appeal to local norms, values, ideology and shared beliefs. Community negotiators will utilise whichever frameworks have the most leverage with their stakeholder. Persuasive arguments framed around traditional and religious values often have more impact than drawing on international human rights and humanitarian law, which are not generally well known and have various degrees of acceptance (South et al., 2012; Yousuf, 2015; Macaspac, 2019; Linning, 2023; ; Barbelet et al., 2023; Davies et al., 2024c; community negotiator interview).

Shared-faith religious leaders frequently use religious arguments to convey the importance of civilian protection and obtain concessions (I/NGO and community negotiator interviews). In CAR, religious leaders might use the 'fear of God's punishment for immoral or unholy behaviour as an argument to encourage a change in behaviour' (Barbelet et al., 2023:20). In South Sudan, faith leaders have the moral authority to initiate dialogue and to engage with people across denominations and faiths (Davies et al., 2024a).

Ethnic norms have also been used in Liberia, Somalia and Yemen (Sawyer, 2005; community negotiator and INGO interviews). In Somalia, it was noted that community negotiators might use specific wording and sentences that have cultural significance and ask authorities or armed actors to adhere to traditional norms (academic interview). There are frequent cases where negotiators (and/or external organisations that seek to support them, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross), transcribe religious or customary rules of war that reflect IHL principles to facilitate protection negotiations (see, for example, ICRC, n.d. and Bartles-Smith, 2022).

However, highlighting domestic and international law obligations might prove beneficial when the counterpart desires international recognition or legitimacy. In these cases, communities may overlay domestic and international legal arguments with customary traditions and religious norms. Domestic and international law might provide more leverage when negotiating with local authorities or state security forces (INGO interview; see also Box 3). In addition, for some armed actors, a fear of international criminal prosecution might make them more amenable to changing behaviour. In short, arguments will be deployed based on whichever norms, frameworks, and values have the most leverage (community negotiator interview).

Depending on how reliant the authority or armed actor is on the community, negotiators may be able to leverage the provision or withholding of the population's support (Jackson, 2018; 2023; Davies et al., 2022; 2024: 27). According to a community representative in South Sudan: 'Community is like water; if there is no water, a fish cannot live. The same thing applies to armed actors. If they don't have a good relationship with civilians, the group will not be able to survive' (Davies et al., 2024a). In some cases, communities would offer conditional support. In Myanmar, religious leaders in some locations legitimise the practices of

armed groups, while simultaneously sending a clear message to the organisation to take care of civilian interests and abide by their agreements (Cismas et al., 2023; academic interview).

Similarly, threats have been used to reinforce community demands. In Nigeria, negotiators would remind political party leaders that their community elected them and if they did not respond to the community's demand, they would not re-elect them (INGO interviews). In South Sudan, threats of violence from community-embedded armed groups have been used (Davies et al., 2024a). In the DRC, some community leaders threatened an armed group by informing them that they would order the community to flee, thus leaving the group without anyone to protect (Suarez, 2017). Threats of withdrawal of support from armed groups to communities have also been leveraged in Northern Ireland (community negotiator interview).

In CAR, the community in Bria would resort to violence against the armed group. '…Following the rape of a very young child by an Anti-Balaka member, a father burned down their house. The rest of the community took the opportunity to burn other Anti-Balaka houses, indicating to the Anti-Balaka that the community had had enough of their violence and impunity' (Barbelet et al., 2023: 24).

Incentives can also be utilised, for example, offering food, legitimacy or aid projects, healthcare, job opportunities, or an exchange of favours (Yousuf, 2015; Arjona, 2017; Suarez, 2017; Jackson, 2021; Bamber and Svensson, 2022; Jackson, 2023; Davies et al., 2024b: 22). In the DRC, communities at times provided basic supplies (such as food, clothing and medicine), shelter or intelligence to leverage their influence with the Mai Mai militia.

In some cases, negotiators will seek to engender sympathy for the plight of the community (Davies et al., 2024a; academic and NGO interview). This is particularly useful when the authority or armed actor and the community are closely linked. In Myanmar, a journalist told the story of a religious leader who was informed by the community that an ethnic armed group wanted to relocate people living in a specific area to safeguard them from an impending attack. However, if the community left, it would affect crops and lead to major food insecurity. The religious leader asked the armed group to delay the attack for three months until after the harvest, or to change the attack's location so as not to affect the community (Academic interview). In South Sudan, armed actors may recognise that continued violence risks the safety and security of the community to which they belong and therefore develop an interest in reducing violence. This approach encouraged one of the armed groups to start a peace dialogue with the government (Davies et al., 2024a).

In other cases, negotiators build their arguments using the parties' common interest. For example, negotiators could use the continued functioning of markets as an entry point to dialogue, arguing that everyone needs access to food (Davies et al., 2024). When tensions between the military and men escalated in a displaced persons' camp in Iraq, women peace teams appealed to a military officer to delay the site's evacuation until school exams finished. The officer listened attentively to the women's concerns and accepted their proposition to avoid a violent confrontation that would negatively impact his military's image. (CCHN, 2024a).

Communities have also been known to point out how the authority or armed actor's practice, such as abuse, is counterproductive to or inconsistent with the authority or armed actors' stated policies and objectives (Yousuf, 2015; Arjona, 2017; Suarez, 2017; Jackson, 2021; Bamber and Svensson, 2022; Ruta, 2023; Davies et al., 2024b). In Colombia, community negotiators would call attention to inconsistencies between FARC behaviour and stated ideology (Kaplan, 2013). In DRC, negotiators reminded the Mai Mai militia about its main objective to prevent or dissuade abuses toward the community they claimed to protect (Suarez, 2017).

Nudging, a process whereby communities seek to catalyse internal dialogue within an armed group on a norm or a community's concern, is another method that has been used. In South Sudan, familial and

kinship ties were used to gently coax armed groups to be more sympathetic to civilian concerns (Davies and Mayhew, 2024a). In Colombia, when armed groups called community-wide meetings, communities would use the opportunity to protest against certain policies and practices. The hope was that when fighters returned to their camps, communities' plights would trigger internal debates, planting the seeds to influence combatants' beliefs and behaviour, generating collective action among the more restrained troops (Chwe, 2001; Kaplan, 2013). Nudging appears to have greater success in the early phases of the conflict before fighting intensifies and armed groups become more abusive (HRW, 2013).

Sometimes, communities will make compromises to minimise or keep violence at bay. In Mali, community leaders agreed to comply with jihadists' interpretation of sharia law to guarantee the community's well-being and security. In CAR, religious leaders offered to collect taxes on the armed actor's behalf to avoid abuses that occurred when the group did it. In another location, the community shared their food with Anti-Balaka to avoid cases of looting or robberies. Payments to resolve kidnapping and arbitrary arrests have also been made (Barbelet et al., 2023). In Afghanistan, communities complied with the Taliban's demands as a bargaining chip (Jackson, 2023). In Sudan, trade-offs have included providing political backing, recruits, or resources (Centre on Armed Groups, 2024).

Lastly, collective approaches have proven beneficial. In Northern Ireland, HPG research found that 'the most significant successful interventions to threats of violence were enabled through joined-up approaches, leveraging the relationships and trust that individual communities or constituencies have' (Davies, 2025). For example, communities trusted by security services can pass information to other communities who do not enjoy this trust, to increase the possibility that a threat is acted on (ibid.).

**Box 4: Ukraine**

In Ukraine, a child-safe location was set up close to the frontline in a government-owned community centre. The organisation running the space saw military people moving in and out with boxes that looked like ammunition. Concerned with reconnaissance drones and child safety, they met with the local authorities who informed them that they were preparing for the opening of a war heritage museum. The organisation appealed to the authorities based on IHL, moral standards and child safety. After several discussions and the eventual presence of an INGO that gave weight to their request, the negotiation was successful. People in military uniform would no longer visit and no one would bring new exhibits until the danger ended. In addition, existing military exhibits would be locked in a separate room (CCHN, 2024b).

# Outcome influencers

Many factors can influence negotiation outcomes. Some can be controlled, while others remain outside the communities' domain.

A fundamental factor is the choice of negotiator and their skills. If the authorities or armed actors don't accept the negotiator, it can threaten the outcomes of a dialogue and the negotiator's safety and security. Research has demonstrated that negotiators' shared suffering, political activism, and social, familial and kinship ties may significantly increase their capacity to influence negotiation outcomes (Oxfam, 2012; Yousuf, 2015; Jackson, 2021; Shire, 2021; Davies et al., 2024b). Additionally, demonstrating a position of non-bias (Davies et al., 2024a; 2024b) and having moral authority (as perceived by the counterpart) are also important. This is why women and faith leaders may be good negotiators (Davies et al., 2024b; see Box 4). Specific qualities, such as staying calm, being non-judgmental, and being persuasive, are also essential (Davies et al., 2024b).

**Box 5: South Sudan**

In Maban, women used their position as part of the county's Inter-Church Committee to negotiate with the SPLM-IO group at a time of ongoing attacks between the group, the government and semi-affiliated Maban Defence Forces. Leveraging the church's perceived neutrality, women's union representatives presented themselves as mothers of fighting youths, moving combatants to tears when they described the harm they were causing to civilians. They managed to de-escalate tensions, securing an agreement from the SPLM-IO to move their military base away from civilians. At the same time, combatants called off an attack planned for a week later (Save the Children, 2023 in Davies et al., 2024a: 24).

Strong community social cohesion, good internal communication, the ability to coalesce around a common priority, and being able to present a unified front have been common factors that led to successful negotiations in several contexts (Anderson and Wallace, 2012; Kaplan, 2013; Masullo, 2015; Yousuf, 2015; Triana-E et al., 2022; Davies et al., 2024a). Authorities and armed actors can exploit any divergences within the community (Jackson, 2021; Ruta, 2023). As explained by an armed actor in Colombia, '…a single individual – a single swallow – will not signify or bring much change but a group, a flock of swallows, means something' (Kaplan, 2013: 10).

If the armed actor sees value in trying to gain or maintain the support of the community, be it for reputational, political, military or other reasons, community negotiators are more likely to be successful (Reno, 2007; Kaplan, 2013; Suarez, 2017; Brenner, 2017; Podder, 2017; Krause and Kamler, 2022; Ruta, 2023; Linning, 2024b). Likewise, empathy with the suffering of the community, often greater where there are close familial, kinship and social ties, can increase the armed groups' willingness to engage in dialogue (Davies et al., 2024a: 26). They may recognise that continued violence risks the safety and security of the community to which they belong or identify with (Davies et al., 2024a). In such cases, the armed actor may be predisposed to negotiate and reduce harmful behaviour (Anderson and Wallace, 2012; Yousuf, 2015; Masullo, 2015; Jackson, 2018; Barbelet et al., 2023).

Similarly, if the authority or armed actor is concerned about its international legitimacy or fears being held accountable to international criminal law, they may be more amenable to changing behaviour (Suarez, 2017; INGO and community negotiator interviews). In Northern Ireland, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 provided much-needed recognition and leverage in dialogue with the Irish Republican Army to show

that what negotiators requested was aligned with international standards (community negotiator interview).

Positive results have been visible when the dialogue is balanced and allows both parties to air their concerns and grievances. However, this is not without its challenges in terms of accountability and justice (Davies et al., 2024a). Long-term engagement and persistence are required, especially when dealing with more than a specific case. As one community negotiator noted, using every opportunity to come together on a regular basis provides opportunities to debrief each other and share concerns (community negotiator interview).

Community negotiations are more likely to be successful if the demands align with the authority's or armed actors' strategic interests, such as maintaining their image (INGO interview). In Afghanistan, engagement was more conducive in areas where the Taliban had firm control. 'Where the Taliban was weak, it was prone to seeing almost any intervention – from polio vaccinations to reopening schools – as a potential threat' (Jackson, 2021). Peace processes also provide openings for engagement. One negotiator noted that Northern Ireland's peace process provided an opportunity to engage in dialogue with non-state armed groups, as the group was struggling with multiple dilemmas and thus was more open to exploring new approaches (community negotiator interview).

The presence of 'spoilers' – agents that act in bad faith against a community's interests – can significantly impact dialogue outcomes. A change in leadership or influence can provide communities with an opportunity to open up a dialogue, and vice versa (Suarez, 2017; Pendle, 2021; Jackson, 2021; see also Shire, 2021; Barbelet et al., 2023; Davies and Mayhew, 2024; Davies et al., 2024: 26; Davies et al., 2024a: 26). In Somalia, the death of an al-Shabaab leader led to greater openness to negotiate with communities and to a more accessible system of governance within the armed group (Shire, 2021). In contrast, in Afghanistan, a local Taliban commander agreed to a temporary ban on improvised explosive devices. The arrival of a new commander coming from a different area broke down the agreement. Efforts to renegotiate were unsuccessful (CIVIC, 2016).

Lastly, articulating community concerns in a way that the authority or armed actor understands can influence dialogue outcomes (Kakar, 2019). This could be how the community respectfully and tactfully present their argument, for example, by using factual evidence to illustrate how the community is impacted (INGO interview). In Somalia, the use of certain words, proverbs and poetry can both incite violence but also resolve inter-clan conflict (academic interview).

# Risk and mitigation measures

As discussed, communities will undertake a 'success-risk' assessment before initiating dialogue. If the risk of increased violence is too high compared to the likely success of dialogue, communities will refrain from engaging with and even avoid the authority or armed actor, as related HPG research has found.

Communities may also conclude they do not have enough leverage on the counterpart. In this case, communities will seek to create stronger ties with the counterpart by developing familial or kinship ties, building relationships, sharing resources, or potentially providing information to reduce the risk to the communities (Davies et al., 2024b). As already noted, they might invite those who have influence on the authority or armed actor to participate in the dialogue (INGO interviews).

As discussed, a lack of social cohesion can be detrimental to a successful outcome. Mobilising the masses to show a united front has been utilised to counter social fracture in both Nigeria and Colombia (Kaplan, 2013; INGO interviews). In South Sudan, diverse practices and beliefs would be welcomed in negotiations (Davies et al., 2024a). Efforts would also be made to foster a cohesive community approach (INGO interviews).

At times, community negotiators may face personal safety and security threats. This might derive from the actors' misconstruction of the negotiator's actions (journalist interview). Community members will seek to reduce these threats in multiple ways, depending on where the threat comes from and the resources they have at their disposal. In some cases, maintaining relationships with all armed actors to avoid appearing as favouring one over another was a strategic solution (Davies et al., 2024a; community negotiator interviews). In addition, some negotiators found it important to maintain their independence from external actors by preserving financial autonomy and not being seen as close to external actors who might be pushing their own agenda (academic, NGO and community negotiator interviews). One community negotiator noted how she leveraged her relationship with an armed group's leadership to address the threat posed by one of its members. A last resort might be leaving the area until the personal risk diminishes (community negotiator interview).

Community negotiators may also be suspected if they engage with an armed group, especially if such activities are illegal, or they may have information the police would like to have (Davies, 2025; academic interview). In Colombia, negotiators would address this by accompanying individuals who were exempt from criminal liability, for instance, the church, the Colombian Red Cross, and those part of the 'defence of the pueblo' movement (academic interview). Community negotiators also mentioned the importance of strategically selecting communication methods and the location of meetings. Several community negotiators cited the fine line they walked and how closely they needed to protect information.

Other risks community negotiators are exposed to relate to the ability to reach the decision-makers themselves. In some cases, decision-makers may lie outside the negotiators' sphere of influence, sometimes linked to cultural and linguistic barriers, such as engaging with foreign armed actors. In these situations, communities will not have the necessary connections or leverage with the actor. Negotiators will choose either not to engage or seek a third party (for example, the authorities) to discuss their issues via more formal mechanisms on their behalf (Barbelet et al., 2023; Davies et al., 2024a; INGO interviews).

Another related challenge has been the fluctuating presence of different armed actors, which challenges the communities' ability to create and maintain relations. In this situation, communities may seek to engage with all armed actors, starting with one and then seeking entry points with others (Barbelet et al., 2023; Davies et al, 2024b).

Lastly, as previously noted, actors who act in bad faith, or 'spoilers', may threaten the dialogue process and the ability to achieve successful outcomes. To counteract spoilers, some communities wait for the bad-faith

actor to be replaced by someone more open to engagement. More proactive methods may include analysing the conflict system and power dynamics and identifying sources of influence that can cut through these power dynamics (CCHN, 2024b). In South Sudan, a successful approach connected local, subnational and national faith networks. 'Leveraging the 'global church' allowed church networks to garner the support of allies and identify international spoilers, where they are based, and the churches that could seek to influence them in order to block the negative influence of spoilers within the diaspora in the region and in other countries' (Davies et al., 2024: 22).

A recurring challenge when international humanitarian actors support communities in their discussions with authorities or armed actors is managing the potential risks such conversations may impose on community negotiators. International humanitarian organisations and communities can perceive risks differently. One way to address this is by undertaking conflict-sensitivity analysis, including an analysis of formal and informal community power dynamics, and practices in how they govern and organise themselves, in addition to joint approaches with community negotiators to identify existing and potential risks, and feasible mitigation measures (Barbelet et al., 2023; INGO interview). In one context, representing the community's interests fell to traditional leaders. However, this approach did not represent women's and youth's voices. To counter this situation, an international humanitarian organisation created and supported women and youth community committees to ensure their voices were heard. When a group of women successfully negotiated with the authorities, the traditional leader was angry at being supplanted and complained to the women's husbands, who forbade their wives from participating in the committees. The organisation conversed with the husbands so that the women could continue their efforts to improve community life (INGO interview).

This example illustrates how international humanitarian interventions must carefully consider and manage their potential negative impact. Some international humanitarian organisations have had detrimental effects on communities. In the past, when external actors introduced new structures, they often ignored (or were unaware of) existing strategies put in place by communities to mitigate levels of violence (Davies et al., 2024b). The multiplicity of externally imposed committees (security, mediation, conflict management, peace, and protection committees, among others) can be harmful, and membership selection can create tensions. This is especially true when organisations draw committee members who are not part of existing community structures, who the community feels are best placed to negotiate on their behalf, or are not trusted by the community. This is the case when the selected person has been involved in the use of force, has political biases or has been imposed on the community. Committees take up an unnatural space and are therefore not the best placed to achieve the desired outcomes. Significantly, they can even undermine organic community efforts. Instead, agencies could put forth individuals in the community who can read, write, and draft reports to comply with organisational requirements (Barbelet et al., 2023; Davies et al., 2024b). This is especially the case when the committees serve the international organisation's interests and needs, rather than the communities they intended to support (Davies et al., 2024b). That said, the experiences of organisations such as CIVIC, Nonviolent Peaceforce and Oxfam illustrate that helping to create inclusive community committees that can undertake protection negotiations can be effective in improving security and strengthening protection outcomes (CIVIC, 2019; Linning, 2023; 2024a; 2024b; Davies et al., 2024b).

# Conclusions

## A formulaic approach to community negotiations?

As indicated above, community negotiation practices are often instinctual, unstructured, and rarely documented. The findings of this research, stemming from 13 countries across diverse contexts, strongly suggest that community negotiators prepare strategically for dialogue, similarly to what is set out in the Naivasha Grid. As noted, the greater the international support, the more aligned the community negotiations become with international humanitarian practices. However, the process varies according to the context and is generally more organic than international negotiation practices. In summary, the following similarities can be observed amongst community negotiators' strategies and their international homologues:

- Establish relationships with relevant authorities and armed actors.
- Collect information on the issue of concern (i.e., who is responsible, who is impacted and how) and the counterpart (what are their objectives, what normative frameworks do they follow, and would they be open to negotiations).
- Follow closely the conflict environment, analyse the interests and motives of the counterpart, and identify the right time for dialogue.
- Identify the priorities and objectives of the negotiation through community consultations.
- Map stakeholder relationships, identify the right decision-maker, and analyse the network of influence.
- Identify the right negotiators who have credibility vis-à-vis the counterpart and can build trust.
- Consider what tactics, messages and leverage the negotiator can use to increase their chances of a positive outcome.

The main differences between community dialogues and the Naivasha Grid are the following:

- They often do not 'design scenarios and establish bottom lines,' as explained in the Naivasha Grid process. Research suggests communities do not have 'bottom lines,' or pre-established boundaries. Instead, they will engage in dialogue as long as it is likely to increase the community's security (Jackson, 2021; community negotiator interview). In fact, communities might agree to trade-offs for the benefit of the community, which might harm certain individuals (Barbelet et al., 2023).
- There is also no 'mandator' role in community negotiations. A mandator is an individual or a group within an organisation responsible for setting a negotiation's strategic objectives, institutional policies and red lines. In community negotiations, red lines have appeared concerning internal dynamics between negotiators and when dealing with outsiders to the dialogue process, but not regarding dialogue outcomes. For example, when several faith leaders are in a negotiation team, there might be a clash in belief systems or practices. '…In some traditions, the sacrificing of animals is a way of displaying agreement with an outcome of a process, but this can conflict with Christian beliefs. Church leaders interviewed stated that it was important to step back and respect traditional practices' (Davies et al., 2024a). In addition, negotiators may set a 'red line' about respecting the process's confidentiality or sharing sensitive information, rather than about the compromises they could make (CCHN, 2024a).
- Lastly, communities generally engage in a dialogue process more frequently than what can be considered a transactional negotiation. There are cases where community-led dialogue can be

regarded as transactional, for instance, when negotiation tactics include offering incentives or trade-offs. In other cases, the discussion might even be considered mediation.

Therefore, a question arises about the value of developing and conveying a formulaic approach specific to community dialogue, such as the Naivasha Grid, which was created by humanitarians for humanitarians. International humanitarian actors and peacebuilders have already trained communities on negotiation and mediation, often conveying standard methods. While appreciated, one community negotiator expressed frustration with the need to 'translate' the international practices to their context and situation. Other community negotiators highlighted their desire for soft skills training, such as active listening, persuasion, reading body language, and negotiation strategy, tactics, and problem-solving training. Notably, they did not request training on negotiation processes. However, as one INGO representative noted, they might not know the usefulness of this type of training.

Community negotiators ' practices and challenges should be studied before deciding whether and how to support community dialogue. A systemic approach might help strengthen existing practices, as long as it is adapted to the community negotiators' specific context, needs, and level. However, such a decision should not be made without speaking with a range of community negotiators across contexts, as took place with humanitarians' direct involvement in the formulation of the Naivasha Grid.

## Humanitarian support to community negotiations

If humanitarian organisations intend to support community dialogue efforts, they must have the appropriate operational setup. For many agencies, this requires changing how they work. It implies dedicating time and resources, engaging in continuous conflict analysis, being flexible and agile in their approaches, and overcoming perceived and real internal dilemmas and obstacles (South et al., 2012; Metcalfe-Hough, 2019; Davies et al., 2022; Barbelet et al., 2023; Davies et al., 2024b: 30). This requires understanding the community's current practices, strengths and weaknesses, and handing over power to the community negotiators to decide what support is needed, on their terms, before embarking on any effort.

Only after taking these steps should options for support be considered. Interventions must be co-created with community negotiators, and the final decision must lie with them and the communities they support.

As such, a one-size-fits-all approach is not recommended and may even cause harm. However, this also means that humanitarian actors must not assume that there is a role for them. Above all, humanitarian actors must avoid imposing external solutions, structures and mechanisms without first considering the specific dynamics, customs, context, and the communities' own efforts. They should not create competing negotiation platforms that apply inclusivity as a tokenistic effort but rather recognise communities' roles and the risks they face. More importantly, they should not co-opt groups beyond their original purpose or will (Barbelet et al., 2023; Davies et al., 2024a; 2024b).

The Naivasha Grid was created by compiling humanitarians' negotiation practices. Likewise, community negotiators' methods have developed organically through their dialogue processes, which must be acknowledged. These negotiations have many similarities with international practice but are inevitably less formulaic. Although training community negotiators on international negotiation frameworks, such as the Naivasha Grid, is not harmful, they must be adapted to the specific community and context and translated into terms the community can understand.

There are many valuable ways to support established community negotiators and community dialogue. A them is to facilitate peer exchange among community negotiators across contexts and experiences, including at the global level. There should be also more focus on soft skills-based as opposed to process-based capacity-building and mentoring. Moreover, communities should be connected to stakeholders and power holders outside their sphere of influence. This includes ensuring that their voices are heard internationally, supporting communities and strengthening opportunities for success. Lastly, humanitarian actors can provide financial and logistical resources to support the engagement process.

## Recommendations

What quickly became apparent during the research is that the type of support welcomed by community negotiators varies greatly by context. The recommendations presented here include frequent suggestions from the interviews, specifically those with community negotiators, and the literature. All recommendations reflect the multi-year research carried out by HPG on the topic.

- **Facilitating peer exchange.** Fostering peer exchanges and lesson sharing is the one aspect that came up across the board, even when other forms of support were not identified. Not only does this support method allow community negotiators to learn from each other, but it might also lead to leveraging their respective networks and connections to support each other, given that joined-up approaches through strong networks have seen significant success.
- **Capacity-strengthening and mentoring** so that community negotiators can build a wide range of skills and knowledge to inform their negotiations (CIVIC, 2019; Davies et al., 2022; Ruta, 2023; Kothari and Meredith, 2023). Generally, community negotiators' experience level reflects the desired level of capacity-strengthening. For those who have experience in dialogue, negotiation skills such as communication, rapport building, negotiation techniques, or problem solving were highlighted, as well as knowledge of IHL and, in one case, context-relevant geopolitics. In addition, mentoring in information collection and adapting negotiators' messages to the appropriate decision-maker was mentioned as helpful, as well as accompaniment in the negotiations when requested (Kothari and Meredith, 2023). Not all community negotiators may require the same training, mentoring and accompaniment. For this reason, the nature and form of capacity-strengthening must be adapted to the community negotiators' needs. Capacity-strengthening approaches should also be designed to be a two-way process with the community negotiators, given that there is much that international humanitarians can learn from communities (ibid.).
- **Connecting communities to wider networks and stakeholders**. This means assisting communities in mapping the conflict system and networks that connect them, engaging with power structures that sit outside their spheres of influence, and leveraging their influence to promote the participation of relevant stakeholders in local dialogues (Davies et al., 2024a; 2024b: 34).
- **Amplifying the voices of affected people,** when deemed beneficial by the community, by using humanitarian actors' access to forums and stakeholders (such as duty bearers as well as global decision-makers and forums) that communities may not have access to, to increase pressure for a behaviour change (Davies et al., 2022). Ideally, this would entail facilitating communities to represent themselves in relevant forums rather than just speaking on their behalf. This could also entail facilitating meetings and fostering trust-building with government authorities, security forces and other armed actors.
- **Providing logistical and financial support**. Supporting the means to carry out dialogue is crucial (Davies et al., 2024a; community negotiator and INGO interviews). Community negotiators often have to travel some distance to meet with decision-makers – sometimes through vast terrain – or across borders. This can be costly, and communities struggle to allocate the resources to do so

alone. Communities may also need to provide refreshments or follow culturally appropriate practices once an agreement is reached (such as killing an animal and providing a meal). The provision of logistical support, stipends to cover the cost of travel, accommodation, communication facilitation, and other support is often a prerequisite to ensuring that dialogue can occur. When communities don't have the required resources, it could mean the breakdown of the dialogue (CIVIC, 2019; Barbelet et al., 2023; Davies et al., 2024a; 2024b). Lastly, as with human rights defenders, logistical and financial support to relocate may be required if the negotiator's life becomes at risk (Davies and Spencer, 2022; community negotiator interview).

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