

# Safeguarding a Dying Practice:

The Role of Shabwani Women in Tribal  
Mediation and Reconciliation

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## The Role of Shabwani Women in Tribal Mediation and Reconciliation

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**Cover photo:** Teenage female dancer waits for her cue backstage during a performance of traditional dancing and music, Ataq district, Shabwa on November 12, 2020 // Sana'a Center Photo by Sam Tarling.



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## Executive Summary

This study explores the rich tradition in tribal mediation and reconciliation work carried out by women in Shabwa, charting their role in resolving family-related disputes as well as larger political conflicts. It argues that despite the prevalence of female mediation in Shabwa today, such practices are on the decline, and find little resonance with the younger generation of Shabwani women, many of whom believe that tribal customs, and accompanying tribal roles, limit their horizons and are unsuited to modern-day life. The advent of war has also brought about new dynamics that further threaten the role of women in mediation and reconciliation, including the emboldenment of patriarchy and the ensuing regression in women's rights and social roles over the years. Given the increased recognition of women's role in maintaining social cohesion and building peace among Yemeni communities, this paper concludes with a set of recommendations that aim to safeguard these practices, and better promote female mediation among younger generations of Yemenis.

# Introduction

Ridha al-Tawila, affectionately called 'Aunt Ridha', was well-known in the Bayhan district of Shabwa. I was a young child in the 1990s and have distinct memories of a day when the insistent shouts of men yelling in the streets stopped us from playing. A man was detained for stealing eggs, and an agitated crowd of men gathered around him, threatening to cut off his finger as punishment. We were petrified to witness such a gruesome act. Aunt Ridha, who heard the commotion, stormed out of her house, asking the victim to forgive the thief and offered to personally compensate him for the stolen eggs. When the man refused, she threw her *khimar*<sup>[1]</sup> at him and said "you are responsible for everyone seeing my face, but if you forgive this young man, I will put my veil back on." Aunt Ridha was from a marginalized social class<sup>[2]</sup> and didn't typically cover her face,<sup>[3]</sup> but the man quickly understood that this gesture was a call for reconciliation per Shabwani customs, where the throwing of the *khimar*, traditionally worn by women, represents an important and highly symbolic practice. Aunt Ridha's veil was returned and the young man was forgiven.

Across Yemen, countless similar acts of mediation and efforts to end injustice are carried out by women on a daily basis. Although many go undocumented, such practices have proved integral to maintaining social cohesion in Yemeni communities.<sup>[4]</sup> With the advent of war, there has been increased focus on the non-traditional role played by women<sup>[5]</sup> in conflict resolution and peacebuilding,<sup>[6]</sup> particularly in communities where tribal customs still prevail. New studies have increasingly focused on both direct and indirect roles women play in mediation,<sup>[7]</sup> providing valuable insight on how women maintain community peace at the local level. This research, however, has yet to examine the views held by the younger generation of Yemenis, many of whom believe that tribal customs, and accompanying tribal roles, limit their horizons and are unsuited to modern-day life.

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<sup>[1]</sup> A *khimar* is a head covering used by observant women in Yemen, which typically hangs down to just above the waist. In most areas of Shabwa, women use the same piece of garment to also cover their faces in front of a stranger.

<sup>[2]</sup> Mediation can be carried out by women of all backgrounds in Shabwa, regardless of their social class, tribe, or other social distinctions.

<sup>[3]</sup> The wearing of veils or face coverings varies among different social classes, reflecting their respective social practices and traditions. Among tribal women, for instance, the traditional practice of throwing the *khimar* is strictly performed during disputes among family members, not strangers.

<sup>[4]</sup> Some feminist literature argues that the 'hidden' everyday practices carried out by women - procreation, day-to-day routines, caregiving, satisfying basic human needs, negotiating inequalities, social relations, and resolving conflict - are integral to social cohesion, but inadequately researched or recognized. See Maryam Alkubati, Huda Jafar and Dr. Esham al-Eryani, "Grassroots Voices: Women and Everyday Peacebuilding in Yemen," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, May 1, 2023, <https://sanaacenter.org/publications/main-publications/20108>

<sup>[5]</sup> Bilqees al-Lahbi, Rim Mugahed, and Magnus Fitz, "Women's Non-Traditional Roles in Tribal Societies," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, February 6, 2022, <https://sanaacenter.org/publications/analysis/16331>

<sup>[6]</sup> Hanan Tabbara and Garrett Rubin, "Women on the Frontlines of Conflict Resolution and Negotiation: Community Voices from Syria, Iraq and Yemen," UN Women, June 2018, <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/2018/Women%20on%20the%20frontlines-WEB-REV.PDF>

<sup>[7]</sup> Ibid.

Against this backdrop, this research paper investigates the role of female mediators in Shabwa, exploring the governorate's rich tradition in female tribal mediation and community reconciliation.<sup>[8]</sup> The findings reveal how such practices, though prevalent, are on the decline. As younger generations challenge traditional gender stereotypes, and economic needs triggered by the war reshape the perception of women workers,<sup>[9]</sup> there has been a redefinition and reassessment of the qualities young women strive for, and many prioritize securing formal, paid employment. Work in mediation and reconciliation, by contrast, is viewed as complicated, archaic, and incompatible with the ambitions of young women in Shabwa.

To safeguard traditional reconciliatory practices, given the indispensable role they have played in broader peacebuilding efforts in Yemen, the paper concludes with a set of recommendations. These aim to help relevant organizations positively promote female mediation, especially among younger generations, not as an ancient and dated practice, but one that stands at the core of peacebuilding in Shabwani society.

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<sup>[8]</sup> The role of mediation, reconciliation, or arbitration is not limited to tribal women and may be performed by women who do not have tribal affiliations. Many non-tribal women play critical roles in reconciliation efforts. Typically, in tribal arbitration the tribal parties to the dispute are brought together in the presence of a male or female arbitrator. Notes are taken on every step of the arbitration process, and documented in official or unofficial files. In *community reconciliation*, conciliators directly intervene in resolving a family dispute or an inheritance case, and offer solutions that satisfy parties to the dispute without the need to document the process. They can also indirectly intervene without the presence of one of the parties to the dispute and seek convergence of views between the disputing parties.

<sup>[9]</sup> A recent study notes that attitudes appear to be changing toward women working in Yemen, although the sustainability of their increased economic empowerment is uncertain. See Fawziah al-Ammar, Hannah Patchett, and Shams Shamsan, "A Gendered Crisis: Understanding the Experience of Yemen's War," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, December 15, 2019, <https://sanaacenter.org/publications/main-publications/8480>

# Methodology

This paper relies on extensive interviews conducted with community members in Shabwa. A total of twenty interviews – in person, by phone, and over WhatsApp – were carried out with local sheikhs, community leaders, teachers, peacemakers, activists, youth, tribal mediators, writers, and heads of local organizations working on reconciliation. Seven of the interviewees were male and 13 were female. The interviews focused on defining past and present roles of female tribal mediators, delving into what remains of the rich heritage of women’s mediation, and identifying factors which have led to its deterioration. To complement the findings, and gain a better understanding of the younger generations’ view of female mediators, twenty questionnaires (10 to each school) were distributed in two female secondary schools – *Arwa* and *Bilqees* – in the Ataq district of Shabwa. Students and teachers participated in responding to the questionnaires, with respondents aged between 16 and 30.

Interviews were conducted between December 2021 and May 2022, while questionnaires with female secondary school students were carried out in January 2022. Face-to-face interviews were additionally conducted in March 2023.

# Tribal Mediation and Community Reconciliation in Shabwa

Mediation is a central reconciliatory practice in Shabwa, where community conflict is often resolved outside the confines of the court. Despite the patriarchal nature of Yemeni society, tribal customs give women an active role in conflict resolution, granting them advantages they can use to resolve conflict.<sup>[10]</sup> Sheikh Nasser al-Qaffan, a tribal mediator in the Ataq district of Shabwa, explains how, in accordance with some Yemeni tribal customs, it is prohibited to threaten women with weapons, and that no one, not even criminals, can be harmed if accompanied by women. Tribesmen, he added, continue to rely on women, seeking their advice, particularly on family matters, and women are included as mediators in tribal conflict resolution processes.<sup>[11]</sup>

One prominent female conciliatory tradition prevalent in Shabwa, resorted to when conflict has reached an impasse, is the intervention of a female mediator and the throwing of her *khimar*. As with the example of

<sup>[10]</sup> Najwa Adra, "Tribal Mediation and Empowered Women: Potential Contributions of Heritage to National Development in Yemen," *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 2016 5(2), pp. 301-337.

<sup>[11]</sup> Sheikh Nasser al-Qaffan, tribal mediator and peacemaker, personal interview by the author, December 15, 2021.



Elderly woman standing at the Shabwani Heritage Festival, Ataq district, Shabwa on June 4, 2021 // Sana'a Center photo by Hafez Makwar.



'Aunt Ridha' above, this symbolic act, tied to concepts of shame and honor, is meant to signal to the parties that talks have reached a dead end. This action calls for a last-ditch effort for reconciliation, at which point the conflicting parties can return the *khimar* to the mediator. Traditionally, this practice was carried out in large families to resolve conflicts among relatives, where matriarchs, revered for their wisdom, acted as mediators.<sup>[12]</sup>

Community activist Al-Anoud al-Qaffan believes such practices are a relic of Yemen's past. Female mediators, she noted, played a larger role when tribal leaders were actively supported by their wives and daughters, but now women's roles are limited.<sup>[13]</sup> Such a view holds resonance among younger generations of Yemenis. A group of young men hailing from different districts of Shabwa said, when interviewed, that "the role of female mediators, if it ever truly existed, is outdated." When people do resort to mediation, it is more often used to resolve family disputes that men simply want to avoid, they argued.<sup>[14]</sup> Sheikha Aisha Hasinah, from the Al Saeed district in Shabwa, disagrees. As one of the most prominent women involved in tribal mediation, Sheikha Aisha says she has used mediation to resolve several disputes, predominantly family ones, but also ones dealing with land and inheritance. She added that both men and women ask for her help in mediation, and noted that she is respected among the community although she is not the wife or daughter of a tribal leader.<sup>[15]</sup>

Fatimah Faraj, the Head of the Women's Development Association, and a known peacemaker in the Ataq district, has intervened as a mediator in several areas in Shabwa. She believes that female mediators play an integral role in reconciliation, especially in tribal reconciliation, even if they do so indirectly.<sup>[16]</sup> For others, the role of mediator is a vocation, spurred by the need to deliver justice to their communities. Salma Bajamal, a tribal woman and mediator in the Ataq district of Shabwa, recounted how she first became involved. "I saw a mistake that was committed in an inheritance case, and, despite realizing that intervening in this case could cause social and tribal problems for me and my family, I could not just look away from this injustice," said Bajamal. Her interventions in mediation and reconciliation continue to this day. Even if they do not involve remuneration, they are performed out of a sense of responsibility for the community, especially when it comes to resolving family disputes.<sup>[17]</sup>

<sup>[12]</sup> Among tribal women, the practice of throwing the *khimar* is strictly performed among family members or relatives. Mediation however is also carried out by non-tribal women, such as the case of Aunt Ridha and others described in this study.

<sup>[13]</sup> Al-Anoud al-Qaffan, community activist, WhatsApp interview by the author, May 15, 2022.

<sup>[14]</sup> WhatsApp interview with a group of youths: Abdrabbuh Al-Barmah, Nasser al-Qaffan, Mohammed Duhaimilan, and Raidan Lawar, March 3, 2023.

<sup>[15]</sup> Sheikha Aisha Hasinah, tribal mediator, phone interview by the author, January 8, 2022.

<sup>[16]</sup> In direct intervention, arbitration sessions are held in the presence of the parties to the dispute and the concerned woman acts as the main arbitrator and rules on the matter directly. This applies in cases such as divorce or custody cases. In indirect intervention, women counsel the male arbitrator of a conflict without directly ruling on the matter. Face-to-face interview with Fatimah Faraj, Head of the Women's Development Association, December 27, 2021.

<sup>[17]</sup> Salma Bajamal, community peacemaker, personal interview by the author, December 30, 2021.

Najibah Mohammed, the head of the Yemeni Women's Union (YMU) in Shabwa, said that mediation has become part of her work. "Many local sheikhs and organizations reach out and ask me to intervene in issues directly impacting women," she says, noting that many YMU projects in Shabwa focus on gender-based violence, which is how she first started her reconciliation work. "I still do this work voluntarily," she continues, "despite the challenges, especially when working with perpetrators of gender-based violence and violence against women and children."<sup>[18]</sup>

Local mediation often helps overcome the anguish associated with long periods spent waiting for legal rulings on family disputes, such as custody disputes and conflicts over inheritance. Rulings through mediation are much quicker than court rulings, which can sometimes take years. The presence of women makes it easier to handle delicate cases, such as when women are subjected to violence or domestic abuse, according to Dr. Ahd al-Khadhir, a gynecologist at Ataq Hospital in Shabwa and a psychiatric expert. "During my work with civil society organizations that support abused women, I have heard many stories from women who say that when they resort to the neighborhood *aqel* or tribal leaders, they wish there had been a woman in place to handle their cases."<sup>[19]</sup>

Mediation carried out by women extends to the political sphere too.<sup>[20]</sup> Cases of Yemeni women negotiating truces between their local communities and armed groups, and securing the withdrawal of armed groups from residential areas, are well documented.<sup>[21]</sup> In Shabwa, when Houthi militias took control of Ataq, and their forces set up camp in the local Yemeni Red Crescent Society post, it was a female teacher, Hiam al-Qarmoushi, who negotiated with the Houthi commander to leave the premises. Her initiative helped secure a neighborhood in Ataq, which had a female secondary school in the vicinity, and thanks to her actions, this area was unscathed by coalition forces targeting the Houthis.<sup>[22]</sup>

Such examples are manifold and continue, but interviewees agreed that the role of female mediators is declining, and risks disappearing. Sheikha Aisha, recounted a time in the 1980s when she received an award from Ali Salem al-Beidh, the General-Secretary of the Yemeni Socialist Party, the ruling party of South Yemen at the time — for her efforts in reconciliation work. Despite the tribal nature and bedouin customs prevalent in many areas of Shabwa, the principles espoused by the Socialist Party — which encouraged mutual respect between comrades and equality between men and women — held sway in many southern regions, including Shabwa.

<sup>[18]</sup> Najibah Mohammed, Head of the Yemeni Women's Union in Shabwa, personal interview by the author, December 10, 2022.

<sup>[19]</sup> Dr. Ahd al-Khadhir, gynecologist and psychiatric expert at Ataq Hospital, personal interview by the author, Shabwa, January 10, 2022.

<sup>[20]</sup> Hanan Tabbara and Garrett Rubin, "Women on the Frontlines of Conflict Resolution and Negotiation: Community Voices from Syria, Iraq and Yemen," <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/2018/Women%20on%20the%20frontlines-WEB-REV.PDF>

<sup>[21]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>[22]</sup> Hiam al-Qarmoushi, Head of the Women National Committee in Shabwa, personal interview by the author, Ataq, May 1, 2022.

At the time, women held prominent roles in different aspects of economic, social and even political life, said Sheikha Aisha. In her view, various factors, including the deteriorating conditions in the country as a whole, and the rapid regression of women's roles, have coalesced to inhibit women's role in Shabwa, which she now views as "too weak" to intervene in the ongoing political conflict.<sup>[23]</sup>

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<sup>[23]</sup> Sheikha Aisha Hasinah, tribal mediator, phone interview by the author, January 8, 2022.

## Youth Perception of Female Mediators

*“The work of a female mediator is not appealing because it does not meet women’s aspirations, it is not technological, and not something they pursue. This is a role for older women. Now, in modern times, why would women care about these issues and problems? The wars we are living through are enough, and much more powerful people have been unable to resolve these conflicts.”<sup>[24]</sup>*

In questionnaires conducted with 20 female secondary students in the Ataq district in January 2022, only 5 percent of the respondents were familiar with the work of female tribal mediators. Up to 90 percent of the respondents said they had never heard of them, while 5 percent deemed it impossible for there to be women powerful enough to make a positive change in society. Some of the respondents rejected the whole notion of female mediation, considering this work a violation of religious laws and local customs, which keep women confined to the private sphere, and make it inappropriate for women to be involved in large tribal disputes and armed conflicts.<sup>[25]</sup>

The findings from the questionnaires corroborate those from the interviews, in which various community leaders affirmed that the younger generation of Shabwani women look down on female mediation, viewing such roles as “archaic” and a regression to the days of ancient tribal customs. Interviewees agreed that a gap in the literature showcasing tribal customs which promote the status of strong and independent female tribal mediators does not help.

Afrah al-Aqrabi, a writer and student at the College of Science and Technology in Shabwa, said: “We aspire to be more sophisticated and promote more progressive roles for women and their political and social interventions, and we do not want to regress to the past of tribal conflicts and barbaric absurdity. The time of traditional female mediators has ended. We want a brighter future for us as girls and women in Shabwa, one where we have a meaningful role in all aspects of political, economic, and social life.”<sup>[26]</sup>

<sup>[24]</sup> Belqeas Faraj, community activist, WhatsApp interview by the author, March 27, 2022.

<sup>[25]</sup> Questionnaire for secondary school students in Arwa and Belqeas schools in Ataq district, Shabwa.

<sup>[26]</sup> Afrah al-Aqrabi, writer and student at the College of Science and Technology in Shabwa, in-person interview with the author, Shabwa, April 11, 2022.



Girls attending a lecture at the Oil College in Ataq district, Shabwa on October 25, 2023// Sana'a Center photo by Hafez Makwar.

For Hussein al-Rifai, Shabwa Governorate's Secretary, disparaging views on the role of women's mediation by younger generations in Shabwa stem from its infrequent use in urban areas. Mediation carried out by women thus has limited influence in the city, or in contexts that are not directly linked to tribal customs and traditions. "Young women in Shabwa aspire to modernity and a civic environment more than tribal customs and traditions," said al-Rifai, "they are also supported by families in this approach." With many households moving from rural areas and into cities, urban girls have more opportunities than their rural counterparts, he continued. "These young girls look up to women in education, healthcare, civil society organizations, and universities, and for many of them, these are their female role models."<sup>[27]</sup>

Generation gaps and shifting ambitions among Shabwa's younger generation of women only tell one part of the story. Social stigma attached to mediation practices carried out by women also play a role, said Hussein al-Rifai. Negative perceptions of women in leadership, or of women who are politically active, continue to prevail in Shabwa and have worsened in times of war. Several prominent local female figures refused to participate in interviews for this research paper, or requested anonymity, because of the negative impact their participation might have on their lives. Al-Anoud al-Qaffan, who works in conflict resolution and tribal reconciliation, said a key reason why mediation and reconciliation work does not appeal to the younger generation of women is that they are afraid of the effects it will have on their social and political lives.

"There is currently not a single young woman who works in the field of community peace in Shabwa," claimed al-Qaffan, "I might be the only one working on resolving conflicts, and this work requires interacting with tribes in different parts of the

<sup>[27]</sup> Hussein al-Rifai, Secretary of Shabwa Governorate, WhatsApp interview with the author, April 11, 2022.

governorate. There are challenges that I face, including being attacked for my work, which is considered non-traditional.” Recently, the work of female mediators has been politicized by parties to the conflict, noted Al-Anoud. She discovered that the security agencies were at one point monitoring her activities, suspecting her of working for one of the parties to the conflict.<sup>[28]</sup>

Bilqees Faraj, a community activist, concurs, maintaining that young women in Shabwa now primarily aspire to “earn a monthly salary, and the ability to exercise functions rather than solving problems, which takes a lot of time, effort, and are a headache to resolve.” She believes that mediation and reconciliation practices are more suitable for men, and that women can, at best, play a supportive role. Echoing viewpoints held by ministry officials and civil society representatives she works with in Shabwa, Faraj added that the appeal in seeking government employment, or working with handicrafts and commerce, is that these fields are more lucrative and safe because they are not violating society’s perception of women becoming involved in politics or security.<sup>[29]</sup>

“The aspirations, abilities, and tolerance of women are not the same as they were in the past, and differ from one area to another,” continues Al-Rifai. Women, he said, now work in domains that are suitable, and accepted by society.” Activities that are more financially profitable are also more popular, especially considering the difficult economic conditions, which have made things that were not accepted in the past acceptable.<sup>[30]</sup>

Young women in Shabwa now prioritize roles that pay well, are not under social scrutiny, and are not affiliated with political or tribal issues. Discussions held with young women in Shabwa confirm this hypothesis, noting that in Yemen’s current climate, safety and security comes first, even if this path does not guarantee their political rights nor freedom of expression. Several women said they would rather open a business at home or in the market, rather than get involved in roles that would require them to deal with a community that might turn on them and on their tribes.”<sup>[31]</sup>

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<sup>[28]</sup> WhatsApp interview with Al-Anoud al-Qaffan, community activist, May 15, 2022.

<sup>[29]</sup> WhatsApp interview with Belqees Faraj, community activist, March 27, 2022.

<sup>[30]</sup> WhatsApp interview with Hussein Al-Rifai, Secretary of Shabwa governorate, April 11, 2022.

<sup>[31]</sup> WhatsApp interviews with women working in Ataq’s Women’s Mall, April 8, 2022.

## Conclusion

This paper sought to shed light on the diverse ways in which Shabwani women mediate local conflicts. The findings demonstrate how women, both tribal and non-tribal, continue to play key roles in resolving conflict. These include resolving conflict over land, inheritance, divorce, and gender-based violence, but also extend to larger political conflicts, such as negotiating local ceasefires and mitigating war-time violations. Signs of these practices dying out, however, are evident, and mostly stem from new dynamics that have emerged with the war, including the emboldenment of patriarchy, the consequent regression of women's roles, as well as the critical view of female mediation and reconciliation work held by the younger generation of Yemenis, particularly women.

The political developments in the country, along with the shifting role of the tribes, are significant factors at play in the deterioration of women's role in mediation. Shabwa's tribes have seen their role change as they work to protect their areas from incursions by the warring parties, and as they negotiate with foreign companies and with oil companies. "Can we really expect women to play these roles?" asked community activist Al-Anoud Al Qaffan, who maintains the war has "led to the abandonment of women." Security threats mean women are more afraid of being abducted or used as hostages by the warring parties, preventing them from participating freely and forcefully in public life. The multiplicity of security actors and agencies has amplified these very real fears, said al-Qaffan.<sup>[32]</sup>

In parallel, the dire economic crisis has rapidly worsened since the conflict began, with families struggling to make ends meet, and has reshaped public perceptions of women in the workforce and pushed more women into the labor market, even if reluctantly.<sup>[33]</sup> Interviewees said that whilst the economic crisis has meant there are very few job opportunities available, and salaries are not enough to meet the needs of working women,<sup>[34]</sup> more women are seeking jobs in government or non-governmental institutions.<sup>[35]</sup> Radio broadcaster Manal al-Kouri says on the matter: "I believe that the war has had a large impact, as this reality has changed people's priorities. Making a living is much more important than social status, or is at least a higher priority."<sup>[36]</sup> "As for female mediation," said community activist Bilqees Faraj, "their work does not lead to any financial gain, just a headache. Our own problems and the conflict around us are enough for us not to aspire to be female mediators."<sup>[37]</sup>

<sup>[32]</sup> WhatsApp interview with Al-Anoud al-Qaffan, community activist, May 15, 2022.

<sup>[33]</sup> WhatsApp interview with Hussein Al Rifai, Shabwa's Governorate Secretary, April 11, 2022.

<sup>[34]</sup> WhatsApp interview with Belqees Faraj, March 27, 2022.

<sup>[35]</sup> WhatsApp interview with anonymous community activist and female employees in Ataq's Women's Mall, April 8, 2022.

<sup>[36]</sup> WhatsApp interview with Manal al-Kouri, radio broadcaster, March 29, 2022.

<sup>[37]</sup> WhatsApp interview with Belqees Faraj, March 27, 2022.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations aim to safeguard traditional practices of tribal mediation and reconciliation carried out by Shabwani women. They are also meant to raise awareness, especially among the younger generation of Yemenis, on the vital role played by women in peacebuilding and to raise the profile of such work. Supporting women in Shabwa to take a stronger role in local mediation, and promoting their role among younger generations, will have a positive impact on peace efforts.

### To civil society organizations and the local authorities in Shabwa:

- **Create dynamic awareness-raising campaigns in Shabwa:** These need to be broad and comprehensive, target younger generations, and should highlight the role of women in mediation and reconciliation.
- **Organize festivals that focus on Shabwani heritage:** Use oral stories, books, and poems that focus on the preservation of Shabwa's cultural heritage. The Shabwa Office of the Ministry of Culture organizes an annual heritage festival; this could be an important opportunity to highlight women's peacebuilding, both current and past.
- **Provide training courses for female mediators:** Mediation requires specific skills in conflict resolution. Courses should improve the skills of Yemeni women working in mediation, reconciliation, and peacebuilding.
- **Consider incentivizing and formalizing the work of some female mediators:** One option could be to pay salaries, equivalent to civil servants', in recognition of their vital work in peacebuilding.
- **Encourage dialogue between Shabwani female mediators and female youth:** Such dialogue should promote the work of tribal mediators and community peacemakers and help change the current perception of female mediators among younger generations of women.

### To UN Women and the UN Special Envoy to Yemen:

- **Implement UNSC Resolution 1325:** At a national level and local level, women must be actively included in Yemen's political process, as stipulated by UN Res 1325, which recognizes women as equal actors in the prevention and resolution of conflict. Within this, efforts need to be made to include women from tribal societies, local community activists, mediators, and a mix of both young and older generations of women.
- **Commission research to strengthen and expand knowledge of Yemeni women's role in local mediation:** Such studies would help mitigate the current dearth of knowledge and literature on female mediation in Yemen, while serving to better inform technical interventions.



- **Target a more diverse range of women in UN programs and projects:** UN projects, as well as partner civil society organizations, must be pressured to diversify the beneficiaries of their programs, while also aiming to include women who are influential in tribal societies.
- **Award/Recognize female tribal mediators:** Recognize and validate community peacemakers for their efforts in reconciliation. Valuing their work publicly ensures these roles are memorialized for future generations.

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