

Case Study Report

The Role of Local Mediation in Managing Water Conflicts in Conflict-affected Contexts

Comparative analysis of
experiences from Taiz

January 2026

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Background of the Study

Water-related conflicts are among the most complex and persistent forms of community conflict in Taiz Governorate, particularly in rural and semi-rural areas suffering from resource scarcity, deteriorating infrastructure, and weak institutional frameworks governing water resource management. With increasing pressures resulting from internal displacement, rising costs of water access, and unequal ability to reach water sources, water has shifted from being a shared vital resource to a driver of tension and conflict reshaping social relations and directly affecting social cohesion and community security.

In this context, water conflicts are not limited to technical or service-related dimensions; rather, they are deeply intertwined with historical patterns of inequality, imbalances of power within local communities, and weaknesses in local governance mechanisms. As such, these conflicts are multi-dimensional in nature and extend well beyond disputes over a limited resource.

Amid this reality, community mediation has emerged as one of the most important local mechanisms for addressing water-related conflicts—whether through initiatives led by community elders, local mediation committees, or with support from local authorities and civil society organizations. However, the effectiveness and sustainability of these mediation efforts have varied significantly and have been influenced by a range of social and political factors and power dynamics. These include the nature of the disputing parties, the position and participation of women and youth in mediation processes, and the extent to which mediation pathways are linked to clear and actionable water management solutions.

1.2 Objective and Scope of the Study

This study aims to document and analyze local community mediation experiences in water-related conflicts across three districts in Taiz Governorate—Jabal Habashi, Al-Ma'afer, and Al-Shamayatayn—through the adoption of a comparative analytical case study approach. This approach goes beyond mere description of events to unpack contextual factors, understand conflict patterns, and extract intervention models that are adaptable and replicable in similar contexts.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

- Understand the social, political, and economic context surrounding water-related conflicts in the targeted districts.
- Analyze the mediation mechanisms employed and the roles of formal and informal local actors.
- Deconstruct power dynamics and social relations influencing mediation pathways and outcomes.
- Extract lessons learned and identify promising, replicable models and practices, while highlighting their limitations and conditions for success.

The study adopted a participatory qualitative methodology, drawing on in-depth interviews with local stakeholders, focus group discussions, field observations, and the analysis of real conflict cases. This approach enabled a deeper understanding of conflict complexities and resolution trajectories. The study also adhered strictly to principles of research integrity, conflict sensitivity, and “Do No Harm,” while taking into account the specific local context of Taiz Governorate.

1.3 Key Findings

The study reached several core findings, most notably:

1. Water-related conflicts are not purely technical in nature; they are fundamentally socio-political conflicts shaped by scarcity, power imbalances, weak local governance, and unequal influence over decision-making.
2. The effectiveness of community mediation varied across the three districts and was closely linked to the inclusiveness of the process, clarity of roles, and the mediator’s ability to manage power asymmetries—rather than goodwill alone.
3. Women’s roles in water-related conflicts remained largely marginal in most mediation pathways, despite being among the most affected groups by water scarcity and the burden of water collection. This marginalization limited the sustainability of some solutions.
4. Local authority involvement proved decisive in certain cases—positively by providing legitimacy to agreements, or negatively when absent or biased toward one party.
5. The absence of post-mediation follow-up mechanisms led, in several cases, to the re-emergence of conflicts in new forms, indicating weak linkage between mediation efforts and sustainable institutional solutions.

1.4 Lessons Learned

The reviewed experiences demonstrated that community mediation in water-related conflicts is more effective when:

- It is grounded in a deep understanding of the local context rather than pre-designed solutions.
- It is managed through participatory approaches that acknowledge and address power imbalances.
- Women and marginalized groups are meaningfully integrated into the process.
- It is complemented by clear, actionable agreements supported by follow-up and monitoring mechanisms.

1.5 Key Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

- Strengthening the capacities of local mediators in conflict analysis and facilitation of sensitive dialogue sessions.
- Systematically involving women in mediation pathways related to water issues.
- Activating the role of local authorities as guarantors and monitors of mediation agreements.
- Linking mediation efforts to practical water management solutions, such as regulating pumping schedules or cost-sharing mechanisms.
- Developing applied, context-based training models rooted in local realities.

1.6 Study-Related Outputs

Based on the findings of this study, the following outputs were developed:

- A **Local Mediation Simulation Guide for Water-Related Conflicts** as a practical training tool.
- A **Policy Brief** targeting decision-makers and supporting entities, presenting actionable and context-sensitive recommendations.

2. Executive Key Messages

1. **Water conflicts in Taiz are not merely a resource crisis, but a governance and power crisis.**

The study demonstrates that water scarcity interacts with displacement, power imbalances, and weak local regulatory frameworks to produce complex conflicts that cannot be addressed through isolated technical interventions.

2. **Community mediation is an effective tool for containing conflict, but it is not a standalone solution.**

While mediation can successfully reduce tensions and prevent violence, it often fails or remains short-lived when not grounded in deep contextual analysis and linked to clear operational solutions.

3. **Managing power asymmetries is a prerequisite for the success of any mediation pathway.**

Findings confirm that overlooking power dynamics—whether related to ownership, economic influence, or proximity to authority—leads to unfair or unsustainable agreements.

4. **Displacement is a structural factor reshaping conflicts, not a secondary variable.**

Displacement plays different roles depending on the local context, ranging from direct pressure on resources to the reconfiguration of power relations, and must therefore be integrated into conflict analysis and intervention design.

5. **Women's inclusion is not only a matter of equity, but a practical success factor.**

The study shows that excluding women results in unrealistic and fragile solutions, while even limited inclusion contributes to improving the quality and sustainability of agreements.

6. **There are no one-size-fits-all solutions to water-related conflicts.**

Comparative analysis across the three districts reveals that apparent similarities in conflicts conceal deep differences in root causes, rendering standardized approaches ineffective.

7. **Mediation becomes more effective when linked to tangible operational solutions.**

Connecting social agreements to practical measures—such as regulating water pumping schedules, network maintenance, and cost-sharing mechanisms—enhances implementation feasibility and reduces the likelihood of conflict recurrence.

8. Shifting from ad hoc interventions to systematic approaches is an urgent necessity.

Strengthening community mediation requires integrated frameworks that combine analysis, capacity building, follow-up, and long-term institutional support.

9. Local knowledge is a strategic resource that remains underutilized.

Documenting and analyzing local mediation experiences provides a practical foundation for designing more realistic and context-sensitive interventions.

10. This report constitutes a practical foundation for developing scalable future interventions.

Its findings can inform the design of mediation programs, water resource management initiatives, and local peacebuilding efforts in Taiz and comparable contexts.

3. Introduction and Framing

3.1 General Background

For several years, Taiz Governorate has faced accumulating challenges in water resource management due to interrelated factors, including water scarcity, deteriorating infrastructure, unplanned population growth, and the impacts of armed conflict and internal displacement. This reality has led to the escalation of community conflicts related to access to water—whether among households within the same community, between host communities and displaced populations, or between water users and those who own or control water resources.

In the context of weak formal institutional frameworks for managing such conflicts, community mediation has emerged as a key local mechanism for addressing disputes, drawing on social norms, local leadership, and existing community relationships. However, these mediation processes do not operate in a vacuum; they are shaped by the broader social and political context, power asymmetries, and the nature of relationships among local actors.

3.2 Water Conflicts in Taiz: More Than Resource Scarcity

Water-related conflicts in Taiz Governorate cannot be understood merely as a direct outcome of water scarcity. Rather, they should be viewed as the result of a complex interaction between material, social, and political factors. Although scarcity is a central driver, it alone does not explain the patterns, intensity, and persistence of conflict unless examined within a broader context of governance failures, unequal access to resources, and weak regulatory frameworks.

In this context, water has in many cases shifted from being a shared vital resource to an instrument of influence and a means of reproducing power relations within local communities. Certain actors—by virtue of social position, economic power, or control over infrastructure—possess the ability to regulate access to water or determine its distribution, while more vulnerable groups bear the greatest burden of scarcity and mismanagement. This dynamic is particularly evident among women and low-income groups, who face not only difficulties in accessing water but also compounded social and economic costs resulting from conflict and instability.

Accordingly, water conflicts in Taiz are less about technical disputes over a scarce resource and more about deeper struggles related to distributive justice, social recognition, and the ability to influence local decision-making. Recognizing this structural dimension of conflict is essential for understanding the limitations of conventional interventions and for explaining the need for comprehensive approaches that integrate operational water management solutions with community mediation mechanisms sensitive to power dynamics and local context.

Field data further indicate that conflicts often erupt around issues that appear technical on the surface—such as pumping schedules or cost-sharing arrangements—but are, in essence, manifestations of unclear rules, low levels of trust, and a growing sense of injustice in resource distribution.

3.3 The Role and Limits of Community Mediation

Community mediation plays a pivotal role in containing water-related conflicts and preventing their escalation into more violent forms. As a locally rooted mechanism, it draws on social norms, community legitimacy, and relational networks within villages and population clusters. These mediation processes are typically led by community elders, local committees, or socially accepted figures, and are sometimes supported by local authorities or civil society organizations.

However, the effectiveness of such mediation is not always guaranteed. Experience shows that mediation may, in some cases, become a temporary, crisis-driven intervention that merely suppresses tensions without building sustainable solutions—particularly when the roots of conflict lie in structural inequalities in water access or in the absence of fair operational rules for distribution and cost-sharing. The study further highlights that some mediation processes:

- Focus on temporarily halting conflict without addressing root causes or reorganizing water governance rules.
- Are influenced by implicit biases in favor of powerful actors, resulting in solutions that entrench the status quo rather than correct imbalances.
- Lack sustainable follow-up and implementation mechanisms, rendering agreements vulnerable to collapse and the re-emergence of conflict in new forms.

This underscores the need for in-depth analysis of existing mediation pathways—not to assess intentions, but to understand the practical conditions of success and failure. When does mediation produce fair and implementable agreements? And when does it merely postpone conflict rather than resolve it? Such analysis helps identify what is required to strengthen mediation as a more effective and sustainable pathway, particularly through linking it to clear operational solutions for water management and agreed mechanisms for follow-up and guarantees.

3.4 Rationale for Selecting the Three Districts

The districts of Jabal Habashi, Al-Ma'afer, and Al-Shamayatayn were selected as the focus of this study based on a set of analytical and methodological considerations. Together, they represent clear geographic and social diversity within Taiz Governorate, while sharing common challenges related to water scarcity and weak water infrastructure. At the same time, they differ in conflict patterns, stakeholder configurations, and prevailing community mediation dynamics.

All three districts have recently experienced water-related conflicts addressed through local mediation pathways that varied in terms of mechanisms used, levels of inclusion of affected groups, and sustainability of outcomes. This variation provides a critical basis for understanding why some mediation pathways are more effective than others, and which conditions contribute to success or failure.

This selection enables a systematic comparative analysis that supports the extraction of adaptable and replicable local mediation models, without overlooking the specificity of each local context. It also allows the diverse experiences of the three districts to be transformed into applied knowledge that can inform the design of more appropriate and realistic future interventions in similar contexts within and beyond Taiz Governorate.

3.5 Positioning of the Study within Existing Literature and Practice

This study builds upon previous research and field-based efforts addressing water-related conflicts in Taiz Governorate, while distinguishing itself through its focus on community mediation as a lived practice rather than a purely theoretical concept. It also seeks to bridge analytical research with practical application by translating study findings into actionable training tools and policy-relevant outputs.

In this sense, the study does not aim merely to describe conflict cases, but to generate applied knowledge that can be used to strengthen the capacities of local mediators and improve the design of future interventions by organizations and supporting actors.

4. Objectives, Research Questions, and Limitations

4.1 Overall Objective of the Study

This study aims to analyze and document community mediation experiences in water-related conflicts in the districts of Jabal Habashi, Al-Ma'afer, and Al-Shamayatatayn in Taiz Governorate. The study seeks to understand the social and political context in which these conflicts emerge, assess the effectiveness of local mediation mechanisms used to address them, and extract lessons learned and replicable models that can inform the design of more effective and sustainable future interventions.

4.2 Specific Objectives

The study is guided by a set of specific objectives, including the following:

1. To analyze the local context of water-related conflicts in the three districts, including the social, economic, and political factors influencing them.
2. To document existing community mediation pathways and map the roles of different local actors involved in managing these processes.
3. To unpack power dynamics and social relationships that shape the outcomes of mediation processes.
4. To assess the effectiveness and sustainability of mediation-based solutions reached in the studied conflicts.
5. To distill lessons learned and identify models that are replicable in similar local contexts.
6. To support the development of evidence-based training tools and policy-oriented interventions to strengthen community mediation in water-related conflicts.

4.3 Research Questions

The study sought to address a set of key analytical questions, most notably:

1. What are the main characteristics of water-related conflicts in Jabal Habashi, Al-Ma'afer, and Al-Shamayatatayn districts?
2. How do community mediation pathways take shape in these conflicts, and who are the key actors involved?
3. What social and political factors and power dynamics influence the success or failure of mediation processes?
4. To what extent has community mediation contributed to reducing conflicts or preventing their escalation?
5. What are the key gaps and shortcomings in existing mediation pathways, and what underlying factors explain them?
6. What lessons learned and replicable models can be adapted and applied in similar local contexts?

These analytical questions guide the trajectory of the study and provide a methodological framework for understanding conflicts and mediation processes as dynamic and evolving phenomena, rather than isolated events.

4.4 Limitations of the Study

Despite efforts to ensure the comprehensiveness and rigor of the analysis, the study is subject to several limitations, including:

- **Geographic limitations:** The study focuses on three districts in Taiz Governorate, and its findings cannot be automatically generalized to all areas of the governorate or Yemen without due consideration of contextual differences.
- **Temporal limitations:** The study examines conflicts and mediation pathways within a specific time frame and may not capture subsequent changes in the context.
- **Methodological limitations:** The study relies on a qualitative approach grounded in participants' narratives and experiences, which may be influenced by subjective perceptions, despite the use of triangulation mechanisms to validate findings.
- **Security and social limitations:** Safety considerations and community sensitivities constrained the documentation of certain detailed aspects related to conflicts or specific actors.

4.5 Importance of Defining Objectives and Limitations

Clearly defining the study's objectives, research questions, and limitations contributes to:

- Enhancing the transparency and credibility of the study.
- Enabling readers to accurately understand and interpret the scope of the findings.
- Avoiding unrealistic expectations regarding the study's outcomes.
- Providing a solid foundation for transitioning to the analysis of methodology and context in subsequent sections.

5. Methodology and Research Integrity Framework

5.1 Adopted Methodological Approach

The study adopts a participatory qualitative methodology aimed at understanding water-related conflicts as complex socio-political phenomena shaped by a specific local context, power dynamics, social relations, and unequal access to resources. This approach enables a shift from viewing conflict as a discrete event to analyzing it as a dynamic process that evolves over time and encompasses material, social, and institutional dimensions.

The participatory qualitative approach allows for the analysis of the lived experiences of actors affected by conflict and for understanding community mediation pathways from the perspectives of participants themselves, including their perceptions of justice, fairness, and the legitimacy of proposed solutions. It also enables the identification of factors often invisible in purely technical analyses, such as social norms, influence networks, and informal interactions that shape mediation outcomes.

The adopted methodology is grounded in a **conflict-sensitive approach**, adhering to the **Do No Harm** principle and placing strong emphasis on context, existing relationships, and the risks of inadvertently reproducing tensions or deepening social divisions. Within this framework, a conscious balance was maintained between the need to collect in-depth and reliable data and considerations related to community safety, research ethics, and participant protection, thereby ensuring both the integrity of the research process and its appropriateness to the local context of Taiz Governorate.

5.2 Data Collection Tools

A combination of qualitative research tools was employed to ensure analytical depth and triangulation, including:

1. **Semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIs):** Conducted with local actors directly involved in water-related conflicts and mediation pathways, including local mediators, community leaders, members of local committees, representatives of local authorities, and women affected by the conflicts.
2. **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Implemented with community members to explore collective perceptions of conflict, its impact on social cohesion, and assessments of previous mediation experiences.
3. **Field Observations:** Included monitoring community interactions, the dynamics of discussion sessions, and patterns of participation, allowing for the capture of non-verbal data not evident through interviews alone.
4. **Conflict Case Narratives:** A number of water-related conflict stories were documented and analyzed as micro case studies to trace conflict evolution, the roles of different actors, and mediation outcomes.

5.3 Study Sample and Selection Criteria

Participants were selected using **purposive sampling** based on criteria that ensured:

- Representation of diverse actors with varying roles and levels of influence in water-related conflicts.
- Inclusion of women and groups directly affected by water scarcity.
- Coverage of geographic and social diversity across the three districts.

The sampling process sought to balance inclusivity with feasibility, while taking into account prevailing security and social constraints.

5.4 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted in phases, including:

- Development of research tools tailored to the local context.
- Training of field researchers on research integrity and conflict sensitivity principles.
- Field-based data collection, with flexibility to accommodate participants' circumstances.
- Concurrent documentation and analysis of data to identify gaps and address them during implementation.

5.5 Research Integrity and Ethics

The study adhered to a clear research integrity framework, including:

- **Informed consent:** Participants were informed about the study's objectives and the nature of their participation, and their voluntary consent was obtained.
- **Confidentiality and identity protection:** No information was recorded or published that could reveal individuals' identities or sensitive locations.
- **Do No Harm:** Questions and discussions that could reignite conflict or expose participants to risk were avoided.
- **Neutrality:** The study maintained impartiality and avoided alignment with any party, presenting analysis in a balanced manner.

5.6 Data Triangulation and Quality Assurance

Triangulation refers to comparing information derived from multiple sources and tools to verify accuracy, consistency, and credibility of findings. The study applied triangulation through:

- Cross-checking data collected through different tools (interviews, discussions, observations).
- Internal review of preliminary findings to ensure coherence.
- Relying on multiple sources to validate key conclusions.

In addition, research tools and analytical outputs underwent technical review to ensure clarity and rigor.

5.7 Methodological Constraints and Mitigation Measures

The study encountered several methodological constraints, including:

- The sensitivity of certain conflicts, which limited the depth of inquiry into specific details.
- Variations in participants' willingness to openly share their experiences.

These constraints were addressed through:

- Building trust with participants.
- Using open-ended and indirect questioning techniques.
- Relying on triangulation to minimize the impact of potential bias.

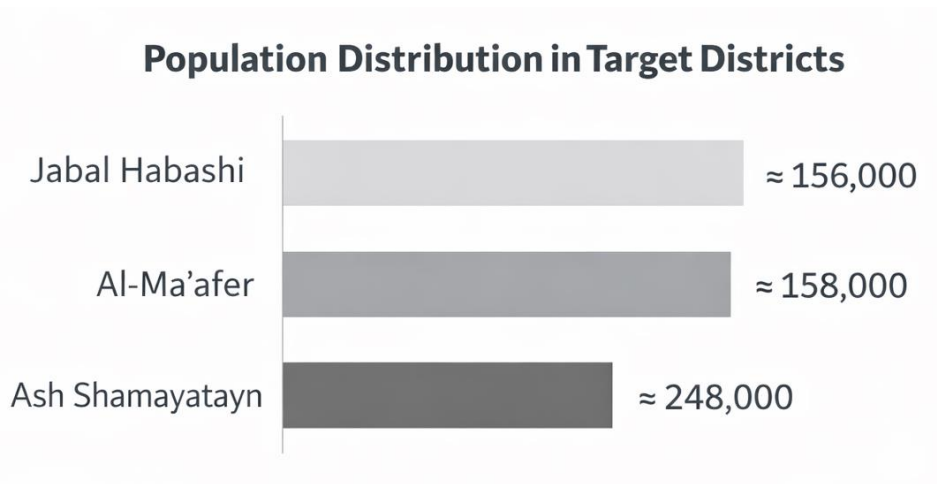
6. Context Analysis: Water-Related Conflicts in Taiz Governorate

6.1 Geographic Scope of the Study and Demographic Context



Taiz Governorate – Jabal Habashi, Al-Ma'afer, and Al-Shamaytayn Districts

The population distribution across the three districts reveals variations in the size of local communities, which directly affects the level of pressure on water resources and the intensity of related conflicts. This is particularly evident in rural contexts characterized by weak infrastructure and high levels of internal displacement.



Source:
OCHA – Humanitarian Needs Overview

Methodological Note: The analysis relies on the most recent population estimates available, which may include both resident and displaced populations.

6.2 Water in Taiz: A Vital Resource in a Fragile Context

Water constitutes one of the most vital and sensitive resources in Taiz Governorate. The water environment is characterized by complex structural challenges, including limited surface water availability, increasing reliance on groundwater, deteriorating distribution networks, and rising operational and maintenance costs. These factors, combined with population growth and internal displacement, have intensified pressure on available resources and turned water into a persistent source of tension within many local communities.

The water challenge in Taiz extends beyond the scarcity of available quantities to encompass how the resource is managed, who controls access to it, and who bears the cost of its absence. In the absence or weakness of effective regulatory frameworks, water management in many areas has become a localized matter governed by informal arrangements that vary in terms of fairness and transparency from one context to another.

6.3 Structural Drivers of Water-Related Conflict

The study demonstrates that water-related conflicts in Taiz are driven by a set of interrelated structural factors, most notably:

- Weak local governance in the water sector, particularly in planning, regulation, and oversight.
- Social and economic power imbalances among local actors, granting some parties greater control over water resources.
- Degradation of water infrastructure, resulting in frequent service interruptions and increased costs of accessing water.
- The impact of armed conflict and internal displacement, which has increased demand for water in communities not equipped to absorb such pressure.

These factors operate cumulatively, meaning that conflicts rarely erupt suddenly; rather, they evolve gradually through the accumulation of frustration and perceptions of injustice.

6.4 Patterns of Water-Related Conflicts

Water-related conflicts in Taiz take multiple forms, including:

- Disputes over control of water sources, such as wells or pumping points.
- Conflicts related to the sharing of operational or maintenance costs.
- Tensions between host communities and displaced populations over priority access to water.
- Intra-community disputes resulting from the absence of clear rules regulating water distribution.

These conflicts often begin at a limited scale but tend to escalate rapidly in the absence of early interventions or effective mediation.

6.5 Power Dynamics and Unequal Access

Water-related conflicts in Taiz clearly reveal power imbalances within local communities. In many cases, certain actors—by virtue of ownership, social status, or connections with local authorities—possess greater capacity to impose their conditions, while more vulnerable groups are compelled to accept unfair or temporary solutions.

This imbalance represents one of the most significant challenges facing community mediation. Success depends not merely on bringing parties together for dialogue, but on the mediator's ability to manage these power asymmetries and ensure balanced representation of all parties' interests.

6.6 The Gender Dimension of Water-Related Conflicts

The study highlights that women are among the groups most affected by water scarcity, given their central role in securing water for household use and the associated additional time and physical burdens. Despite this, women's participation in decision-making and mediation processes remains limited, and they are often perceived as conflict-affected individuals rather than active agents in conflict resolution.

This marginalization leads to the neglect of essential needs in the design of mediation solutions and undermines the sustainability of agreements reached. The findings underscore the importance of systematically integrating women into mediation pathways—not only from an equity perspective, but also as a practical determinant of effective and sustainable outcomes.

6.7 The Role of Community Mediation in This Context

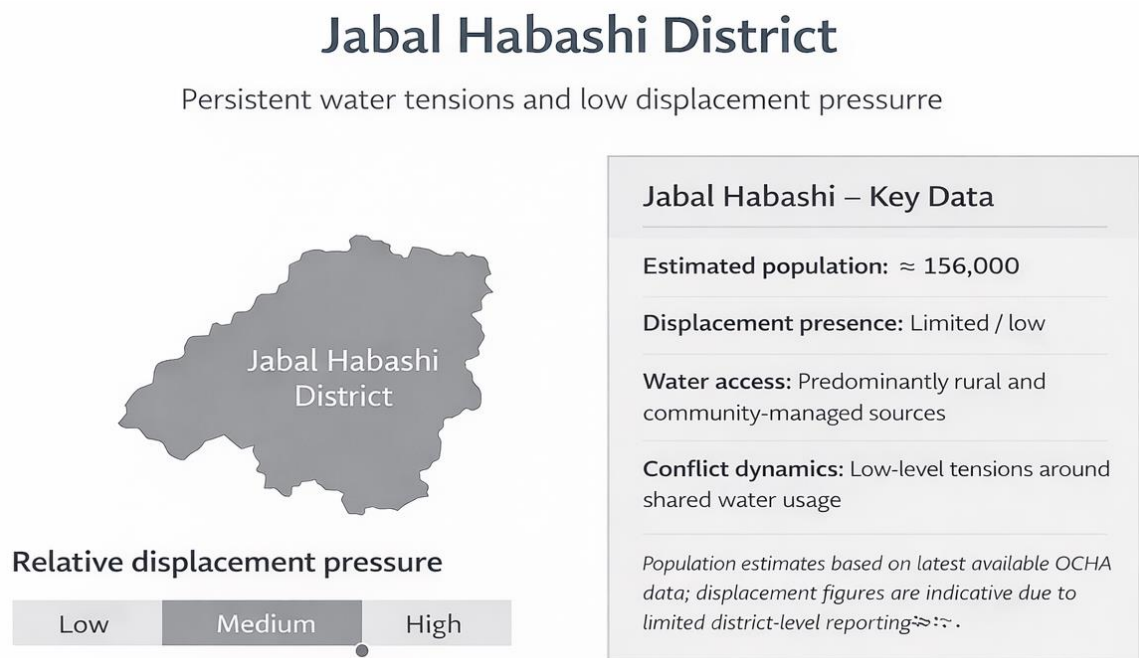
Within this complex context, community mediation plays a dual role: on the one hand, it serves as a mechanism for containing conflicts and preventing escalation; on the other, it acts as a mirror reflecting existing power relations and social dynamics. Experience shows that mediation is most effective when managed as a comprehensive process that addresses the root causes of conflict, rather than merely serving as a tool to defuse surface-level tensions.

This contextual analysis lays the groundwork for a deeper understanding of the local experiences in the three districts, which will be examined in detail in the subsequent sections.

7. District Case Studies

7.1 Jabal Habashi District

7.1.1 Overview of Jabal Habashi District



Despite its relatively moderate population size, Jabal Habashi District experiences persistent water-related tensions, primarily driven by limited rural infrastructure and increasing pressure on shared water sources.

While displacement dynamics within the district remain relatively low compared to other districts, the presence of contact zones and population movements in neighboring districts continues to affect local arrangements governing access to water. Accordingly, community mediation efforts in Jabal Habashi have largely focused on managing resource scarcity and preserving fragile social agreements, rather than responding to pressures resulting from large-scale displacement.

Sources: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) – Humanitarian Needs Overview; qualitative insights derived from the field-based case study.

Note: Displacement data at the district level are indicative, given the limited availability of disaggregated data at this geographic scale.

The district’s population is estimated at approximately **156,000 people**, based on the latest OCHA – Humanitarian Needs Overview figures. This estimate may include both resident and displaced populations. Jabal Habashi is a predominantly rural district in Taiz Governorate that relies almost entirely on groundwater and local water sources to meet residents’ needs. The district is characterized by dispersed settlements, limited water infrastructure, and a strong reliance on community-led initiatives for water resource management, whether through privately owned wells or small-scale local networks.

In recent years, the district has witnessed a noticeable increase in the number of displaced households settling within villages and host communities, placing additional pressure on existing water sources that were not designed to accommodate such an expansion in demand. This situation has reshaped patterns of water use and generated new tensions between host communities and displaced populations, particularly in the absence of clear arrangements regulating access to water resources.

Gender Dimension:

Within this context, women bear the greatest burden in adapting to water scarcity, whether through traveling longer distances to fetch water or managing household consumption under conditions of limited availability. As a result, any disruption in access to water constitutes a direct and daily source of pressure on women.

7.1.2 Mapping of Local Actors and Power Analysis

The study indicates that water management and related conflicts in Jabal Habashi are influenced by a range of local actors with varying roles and degrees of influence, including:

- **Water source owners (wells):** They hold significant power due to their direct control over the resource.
- **Local community committees or initiatives:** They play an informal regulatory role, with effectiveness varying by context.
- **Local authorities:** Their presence is inconsistent—at times supportive of mediation efforts, and at other times absent or limited in influence.
- **Displaced households:** Often occupy a weaker negotiating position and rely on existing community arrangements.
- **Women:** Active in managing daily water consumption, yet largely absent from decision-making spaces.

This landscape highlights that power asymmetries are a decisive factor shaping both conflict dynamics and mediation processes, with certain actors able to impose their conditions while others—particularly displaced populations and women—lack effective means of influence.

7.1.3 Patterns of Water-Related Conflicts in Jabal Habashi

Water-related conflicts in the district typically revolve around several recurring issues, including:

- Disputes over priority access to water sources between host communities and displaced populations.
- Conflicts related to the sharing of operational and maintenance costs in a context of limited income.
- Tensions arising from changing consumption patterns due to an increase in the number of beneficiaries.

These conflicts often begin on a limited scale but gradually escalate when accompanied by perceptions of injustice or the absence of clear rules governing distribution.

7.1.4 Social Relationship Dynamics and Power Imbalances

Water-related conflicts in Jabal Habashi demonstrate that social relationships play a dual role: on the one hand, they facilitate recourse to mediation; on the other, they may hinder the achievement of equitable solutions when power balances are unequal. In some cases, mediation processes tend to reinforce the status quo rather than transform it, producing solutions that satisfy stronger parties without addressing the grievances of more vulnerable groups.

Expanded Gender Dimension:

Interviews revealed that women's absence from mediation tables in certain cases led to the neglect of essential needs, such as pumping schedules compatible with domestic responsibilities or the location of distribution points, which negatively affected the sustainability of the agreements reached.

7.1.5 Existing Community Mediation Pathways

Mediation efforts in Jabal Habashi have primarily relied on:

- Initiatives led by local elders.
- Interventions by community committees to manage disputes.
- Limited support from local authorities in some cases.

While these mediation efforts were characterized by flexibility and speed, they often lacked:

- Clear documentation of agreements.
- Follow-up mechanisms.
- Balanced inclusion of all concerned parties.

7.1.6 Assessment of Mediation Effectiveness and Sustainability

The study found that community mediation in Jabal Habashi:

- Succeeded in containing conflicts and preventing escalation in the short term.
- Struggled to achieve sustainable solutions when root causes were not addressed or when vulnerable groups were not adequately integrated.
- Was directly influenced by the level of engagement of local authorities as guarantors of mediation agreements.

7.1.7 Key Lessons Learned from the Jabal Habashi Experience

Key lessons include:

- Water-related conflicts cannot be separated from the displacement context.
- Effective mediation requires deliberate management of power imbalances.
- Integrating women enhances both the quality and sustainability of solutions.
- Undocumented agreements are highly vulnerable to collapse.

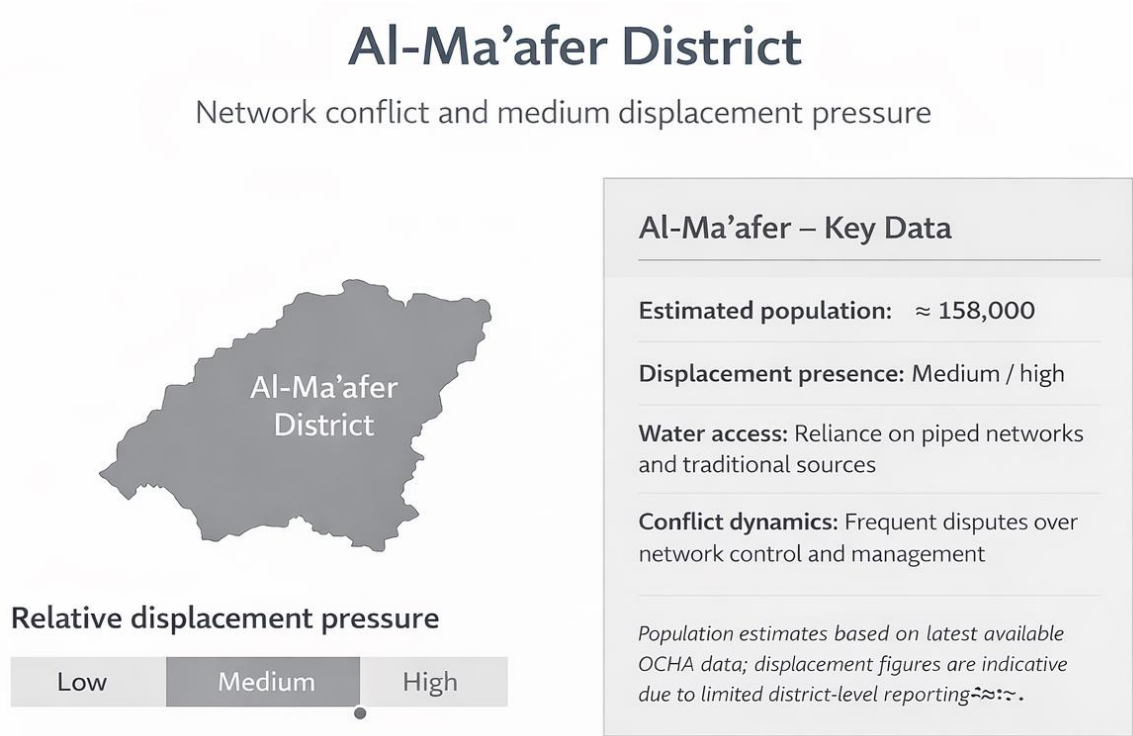
7.1.8 A Replicable Local Mediation Model

The Jabal Habashi model proposes the following steps:

1. Conducting conflict analysis with the participation of all parties.
2. Engaging women and displaced populations from the outset.
3. Defining clear rules for water distribution and cost-sharing.
4. Documenting the agreement.
5. Establishing a follow-up mechanism with the involvement of local authorities.

7.2 Al-Ma’afer District

7.2.1 Overview of Al-Ma’afer District



Despite its relatively moderate population size, Al-Ma’afer District faces increasing water-related pressures that stem not only from scarcity, but also from the complexities of managing shared water networks serving multiple population clusters.

Displacement dynamics in the district are characterized by a moderate level of presence, which adds an additional burden on existing water infrastructure and disrupts traditional arrangements for water sharing and access regulation. In this context, community mediation efforts in Al-Ma’afer have focused more heavily on addressing disputes related to control over water networks and their management, and on recalibrating distribution rules and local governance mechanisms, rather than on managing scarcity itself.

Sources: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) – Humanitarian Needs Overview; qualitative insights derived from the field-based case study.

Note: Displacement data at the district level are indicative, due to limited availability of disaggregated data at this geographic scale.

7.2.1 Contextual Overview of Al-Ma’afer District

The district’s population is estimated at approximately **158,000 people**, based on the latest OCHA – Humanitarian Needs Overview figures. This estimate may include both resident and displaced populations. Al-Ma’afer District is geographically expansive and characterized by diverse population clusters, with many villages relying on shared local water networks and wells that serve multiple communities simultaneously.

This form of “enforced shared use” of water resources means that any disruption in management or distribution can quickly escalate into protracted disputes involving multiple parties. In recent years, the district has experienced varying levels of displacement inflows. Although not as intense as in some other districts, these movements have nonetheless been sufficient to destabilize existing arrangements, particularly in villages where water networks were already operating at or near maximum capacity.

Gender Dimension:

In Al-Ma'afer, women play a critical role in daily adaptation to water interruptions, especially in villages located far from population centers. Women are often compelled to reorganize household water-use patterns or seek costly alternatives, despite having little to no formal presence within water management structures.

7.2.2 Mapping of Local Actors and Power Analysis

The actor landscape in Al-Ma'afer is more complex than in Jabal Habashi, due to overlapping interests across multiple villages or sub-districts. Key actors include:

- **Water network management committees:** They hold significant organizational influence, though often without formal regulation.
- **Local elders with cross-community legitimacy:** They frequently act as mediators when disputes escalate.
- **Local authorities:** Their role is more visible in form, but inconsistent in effectiveness.
- **Displaced households and peripheral communities:** Often the least represented in decision-making processes.
- **Women:** Their involvement is informal and largely limited to conveying complaints through intermediaries.

This configuration demonstrates that conflicts do not occur between two parties alone, but within a multi-layered network of relationships, which significantly complicates mediation processes.

7.2.3 Patterns of Water-Related Conflicts in Al-Ma'afer

The most prominent patterns of water-related conflicts in Al-Ma'afer include:

- Disputes between villages over the sharing of water from a single network.
- Conflicts related to determining pumping schedules and usage priorities.
- Tensions arising from non-compliance with previous agreements.
- Recurrent complaints regarding the unequal distribution of financial burdens.

These conflicts are cumulative in nature; they rarely erupt due to a single incident, but rather emerge from the accumulation of repeated management failures.

7.2.4 Social Relationship Dynamics and Power Imbalances

Conflicts in Al-Ma'afer reveal that social status and extended networks play a decisive role in shaping mediation outcomes. In some cases, mediation processes are conducted in ways that favor villages with greater influence, while less powerful communities are asked to “concede for the sake of the public good.”

Expanded Gender Dimension:

Discussions revealed that ignoring women's voices in determining pumping schedules or distribution points resulted in impractical solutions that quickly lost effectiveness and reproduced tensions within the community.

7.2.5 Existing Community Mediation Pathways

Mediation efforts in Al-Ma'afer have relied on:

- Interventions by expanded local committees.
- Mediation led by elders accepted by multiple villages.
- Limited or delayed support from local authorities.

Although these mediation efforts sometimes succeeded in restoring network functionality, they often:

- Lacked clear implementation mechanisms.
- Failed to include sanctions or incentives for compliance.
- Overlooked the gender dimension.

7.2.6 Assessment of Mediation Effectiveness and Sustainability

The study findings indicate that:

- Mediation in Al-Ma'afer is relatively effective in crisis management.
- However, it is less sustainable when agreements are not translated into clear operational arrangements.
- The absence of follow-up mechanisms led, in some cases, to the re-emergence of conflicts in more complex forms.

7.2.7 Key Lessons Learned from the Al-Ma'afer Experience

- Inter-village conflicts require multi-level mediation approaches.
- Equity in distribution is more important than the speed of reaching a solution.
- Women's participation improves the quality of operational decisions.
- Undocumented agreements have limited durability.

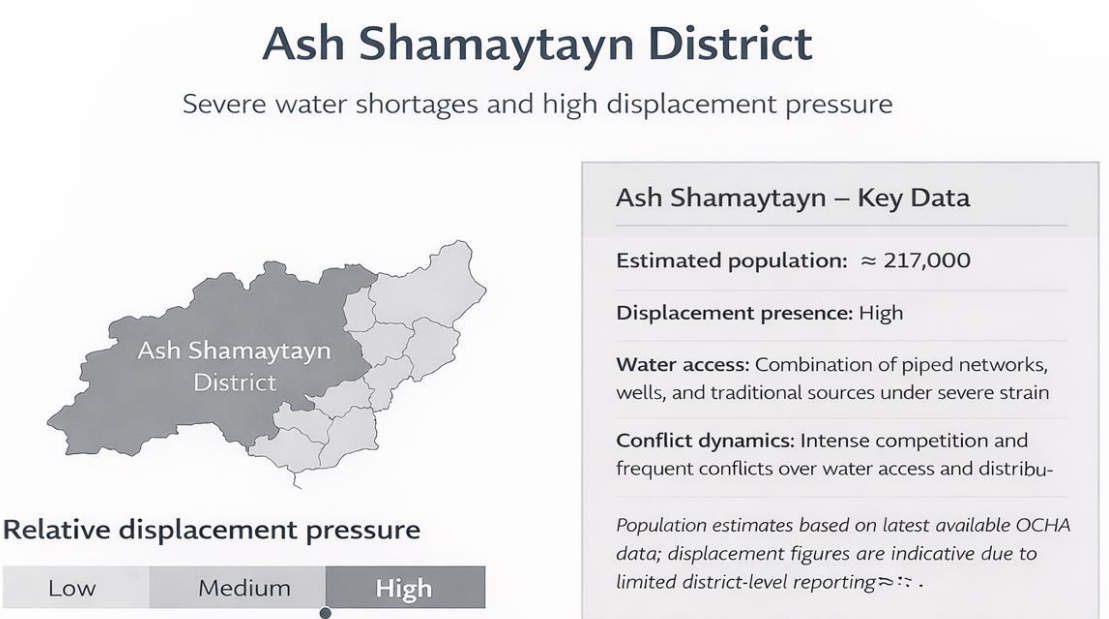
7.2.8 A Replicable Local Mediation Model – Al-Ma'afer

The Al-Ma'afer model proposes:

1. Balanced representation of all affected villages.
2. Establishing written rules for water distribution.
3. Involving women in defining pumping schedules.
4. Designating a clear follow-up entity.
5. Linking mediation outcomes to an operational and maintenance plan.

7.3 Al-Shamaytayn District

7.3.1 Overview of Al-Shamaytayn District



Al-Shamaytayn District bears the heaviest burden of acute water crises, which have been significantly exacerbated by high levels of internal displacement. Increasing population movements into the district have placed severe pressure on already limited and overstretched water infrastructure, intensifying competition over available water resources.

Existing water networks and wells are under sustained strain, while traditional water sources have become increasingly unable to bridge the gap resulting from the decline or collapse of formal systems. The intersection of armed conflict with civilian competition over water distribution has further escalated tensions, rendering disputes more volatile and complex, and complicating community mediation efforts.

As a result, mediation efforts in Al-Shamaytayn have largely focused on containing acute escalations and managing emergency disputes related to water access, prioritizing immediate crisis response over long-term solutions.

Sources: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) – Humanitarian Needs Overview; qualitative insights derived from the field-based case study.

Note: Displacement data at the district level are indicative, due to limited availability of disaggregated data at this geographic scale.

The district’s population is estimated at approximately **248,000 people**, based on the latest OCHA – Humanitarian Needs Overview figures. This estimate may include both resident and displaced populations. Al-Shamaytayn is among the districts most affected by the intersection of displacement and water-related conflicts in Taiz Governorate, due to its geographic location and proximity to areas that have received large numbers of displaced households during years of conflict.

This situation has resulted in unprecedented pressure on local water sources, including wells and small-scale networks originally designed to serve much smaller populations. Al-

Shamayatatyn is also characterized by pronounced social diversity within local communities, encompassing host populations and displaced groups, alongside clear economic disparities. These factors have contributed to increasingly complex patterns of interaction around water, transforming it into both a space of negotiation and a source of conflict.

Gender Dimension:

In Al-Shamayatatyn, the burdens borne by women are compounded by displacement dynamics. In many cases, women are responsible for securing water for extended or shared households amid intense competition over resources, making any disruption in distribution a direct and daily source of pressure on them.

7.3.2 Mapping of Local Actors and Power Analysis

The actor landscape in Al-Shamayatatyn exhibits a higher level of complexity than in the previous districts and includes:

- **Well owners and network operators:** They wield direct economic power.
- **Local authorities:** Their role is more visible due to the intensity of disputes, but remains inconsistent.
- **Host communities:** They seek to preserve pre-existing privileges in access to water.
- **Displaced households:** A major actor in terms of numbers and impact, yet with weaker bargaining power.
- **Women:** Key actors in managing household consumption, but with limited representation in mediation processes.

This configuration reveals a fragile balance of power, whereby even minor changes in arrangements can reignite conflict.

7.3.3 Patterns of Water-Related Conflicts in Al-Shamayatatyn

Water-related conflicts in Al-Shamayatatyn are characterized by their complex and multi-actor nature. Prominent patterns include:

- Disputes between host communities and displaced populations over priority access to water.
- Conflicts related to water pricing or the sharing of operational costs.
- Tensions arising from accusations of monopolization or favoritism in resource management.
- Disputes within extended households over water-sharing among multiple family units.

These conflicts are often quick to ignite and highly sensitive to rumors or poorly considered interventions.

7.3.4 Social Relationship Dynamics and Power Imbalances

Al-Shamayatatyn clearly illustrates how unmanaged power imbalances can undermine mediation processes. In some cases, mediation efforts tend to favor host communities under the justification of “historical entitlement,” while displaced populations are asked to accept temporary or costly arrangements.

Expanded Gender Dimension:

Data indicate that the exclusion of women from mediation tables in Al-Shamayatatyn resulted in solutions that overlooked the realities of daily water use within displaced households, rendering agreements short-lived and unable to endure.

7.3.5 Existing Community Mediation Pathways

Mediation efforts in Al-Shamayatatyn have been characterized by:

- Multiple and repeated mediation interventions due to recurring conflict.
- Uneven participation of affected parties.
- Heavy reliance on social pressure rather than structured negotiation.
- Fluctuating involvement of local authorities, sometimes acting as guarantors and at other times as non-neutral actors.

Despite these limitations, mediation has played an important role in preventing disputes from escalating into open violence.

7.3.6 Assessment of Mediation Effectiveness and Sustainability

The study findings indicate that:

- Mediation in Al-Shamayatatyn is necessary but insufficient on its own.
- It has been effective in managing immediate crises.
- It has failed to achieve sustainability when not integrated with clear operational and regulatory solutions.
- The absence of follow-up mechanisms has led to the re-emergence of conflicts in new forms.

7.3.7 Key Lessons Learned from the Al-Shamayatatyn Experience

- Displacement is a central factor that cannot be overlooked.
- Perceived justice is more critical than technical solutions alone.
- Mediation requires clear institutional support.
- Women’s inclusion is a prerequisite for successful solutions in high-pressure contexts.

7.3.8 A Replicable Local Mediation Model – Al-Shamayatatayn

The Al-Shamayatatayn model proposes:

1. Balanced representation of host and displaced communities.
2. Explicit management of power imbalances.
3. Involving women in the design of solutions.
4. Documenting agreements and linking them to local authorities.
5. Establishing a flexible and rapid-response follow-up mechanism.

Concluding Comparative Insight:

The analysis of the three district case studies demonstrates that, despite surface-level similarities, water-related conflicts in Taiz differ significantly in their root causes, dynamics, and mediation pathways. This diversity underscores the importance of context-specific solutions and cautions against one-size-fits-all approaches, while highlighting the value of adaptable and replicable models that respect the unique characteristics of each local context.

8. Comparative Analysis Across the Three Districts (Comparative Analysis)

Comparative Analysis of Jabal Habashi, Al-Ma’afer, and Al Shamaytayn

What are the key similarities and differences in conflict dynamics and mediation roles?

Analytic Dimension	Jabal Habashi	Al-Ma’afer	Ash Shamaytayn
Relative Population Size	Moderate	Moderate	High
Displacement Pressure	Low	Moderate	High
Nature of Water Conflict	Scarce Shared Sources	Network Management & Distribution	Intense Competition & System Collapse
Power Dynamics	Resource Ownership	Collective Network Control	Economic Influence & Proximity to Power
Mediation Role	Managing Scarcity & Maintaining Balance	Resetting Distribution Rules	Containing Escalation & Preventing Explosions
Sustainability Potential	Moderate	Moderate	Low

How Population Density, Displacement, and Water Governance Shape Conflict and Mediation Pathways

Analytical Dimension	Jabal Habashi	Al-Ma’afer	Al-Shamayatayn
Relative population size	Medium	Medium	High
Displacement pressure	Low	Medium	High
Nature of water conflict	Scarcity of shared sources	Network management and distribution	Acute competition + system collapse
Power dynamics	Ownership of water sources	Collective control over networks	Economic influence and proximity to authority
Role of mediation	Managing scarcity and maintaining balance	Recalibrating distribution rules	Containing escalation and preventing breakdown
Sustainability potential	Medium	Medium	Low

- The comparison demonstrates that water-related conflicts do not follow a single pattern, but are shaped by the interaction between local context, displacement dynamics, and infrastructure conditions.
- In districts with lower displacement pressure, such as Jabal Habashi, mediation focused on managing water scarcity and preserving existing social agreements.
- In Al-Ma’afer, disputes over shared network management redefined mediation as a tool for reorganizing local water governance.
- In Al-Shamayatayn, large-scale displacement and the overlap with security-related factors transformed mediation into a mechanism primarily aimed at containing escalation rather than achieving sustainable solutions.

These differences clearly indicate that the design of any future water-related mediation intervention must be grounded in an in-depth understanding of local context, rather than assumptions of uniform solutions.

8.1 Introduction to the Comparative Analysis

This section aims to identify shared patterns and key differences across community mediation experiences in Jabal Habashi, Al-Ma'afer, and Al-Shamaytayn through a systematic comparative analysis focusing on the nature of water-related conflicts, the power dynamics influencing them, the roles of local actors, and the effectiveness and sustainability of mediation pathways.

The comparative analysis seeks to understand how and why mediation trajectories and outcomes differ across local contexts, despite similarities in overarching water-related challenges. It also explores the relationship between social and institutional context on the one hand, and the nature of the solutions reached on the other, enabling the identification of factors that enhance mediation success or limit its ability to produce fair and implementable outcomes.

This analysis does not aim to rank districts or issue normative judgments regarding “better” or “weaker” performance. Rather, it seeks to transform diverse local experiences into applied knowledge that supports the extraction of practical lessons and the development of more context-sensitive and adaptable intervention models. In this sense, the comparative analysis serves as a bridge between accumulated field experience and the design of more realistic and effective future interventions.

8.2 Conflict Patterns: Similar Appearances, Different Roots

Despite apparent similarities in water-related conflicts across the three districts—particularly their association with resource scarcity and increasing pressure on water sources—the study reveals fundamental differences in the underlying drivers, contexts of emergence, and pathways of escalation. The analysis shows that “scarcity” provides a common framing, but does not alone explain the nature or intensity of conflict in each local context.

In **Jabal Habashi**, conflict was closely linked to increasing internal displacement into resource-constrained communities, generating direct tensions between host populations and displaced households over entitlements to water access, boundaries of social solidarity, and mechanisms for sharing resources. In this context, conflict assumed a distinctly social character, driven by fears of exclusion and competition over a resource perceived as essential for survival.

In **Al-Ma'afer**, conflict centered primarily on the management of shared water networks serving multiple population clusters. Issues of distributional justice and the organization of roles and responsibilities were more prominent than absolute resource scarcity. The absence of clear operational rules and agreed mechanisms for maintenance and cost-sharing played a pivotal role in reproducing conflict, even during periods without acute water shortages.

In **Al-Shamayatayn**, large-scale displacement intersected with pre-existing economic and social power imbalances, rendering conflicts more complex and rapidly escalating. Disparities in influence and control over water infrastructure transformed disputes from disagreements over access into asymmetric struggles involving economic, social, and political dimensions.

This diversity in conflict patterns underscores the limited effectiveness of standardized approaches to water conflict resolution and highlights the necessity of grounding interventions in a nuanced understanding of local context, conflict drivers, and power relations—both in community mediation and in operational water management solutions.

8.3 Power Dynamics and Their Role in Mediation Pathways

The comparison across the three districts demonstrates that power dynamics play a decisive role in shaping mediation pathways and outcomes, affecting not only the likelihood of reaching agreements, but also their fairness and durability. Community mediation does not occur in a neutral vacuum; rather, it is directly influenced by existing power balances among disputing parties and influential local actors.

In **Jabal Habashi**, power was primarily concentrated around ownership of water sources and direct control over access points, granting certain actors greater bargaining power from the outset of mediation processes. Mediators were therefore required to actively address visible power asymmetries, as neglecting them often resulted in superficial agreements lacking broad acceptance.

In **Al-Ma'afer**, power was embedded in extended networks of relationships among villages and population clusters, and in the capacity for collective mobilization. Influence in this context was more collective than individual, making mediation pathways highly sensitive to local alliances and the representation of interests within negotiation processes.

In **Al-Shamayatayn**, economic power intersected with proximity to local authorities, creating compounded power asymmetries that profoundly affected mediation trajectories. While this intersection sometimes facilitated rapid settlements, it also increased the risk of producing inequitable or short-lived agreements, particularly in the absence of oversight and follow-up mechanisms.

These dynamics were clearly reflected in mediation outcomes. Mediation processes proved more successful and sustainable when power imbalances were consciously managed—through balanced representation, the strengthening of neutral mediation roles, or the linkage of agreements to clear implementation guarantees. Conversely, mediation efforts faltered or remained short-lived when power asymmetries were ignored or treated as immutable realities.

8.4 The Role of Displacement in Reshaping Conflicts

Displacement is a common factor across the three districts, yet its role in shaping water-related conflicts and mediation pathways varies significantly depending on local context and actor configurations. The analysis shows that displacement should not be understood as an external or temporary shock, but as a structural factor interacting with existing social and economic arrangements to reshape conflict patterns and power balances.

In **Jabal Habashi**, displacement exerted direct pressure on already limited water resources, intensifying tensions between host communities and displaced populations and raising sensitive questions about entitlement, solidarity, and the limits of shared resource use. This pressure accelerated conflict emergence and increased the complexity of mediation in a context of perceived competition over survival resources.

In **Al-Ma'afer**, displacement disrupted established arrangements for managing shared water networks without necessarily serving as the primary driver of conflict. By redistributing demand and weakening previous inter-village understandings, displacement exposed the fragility of existing agreements and underscored the need to reorganize governance and sharing rules.

In **Al-Shamayatayn**, displacement played a central role in reshaping economic and social power relations, intersecting with pre-existing inequalities in influence and resources. This interaction contributed to heightened conflict complexity and faster escalation, while also deeply affecting mediation pathways, representation, and prospects for fair and sustainable solutions.

These findings confirm that displacement must be treated as a core analytical dimension—not a secondary variable—in the analysis of water-related conflicts and in the design of mediation and response interventions.

8.5 The Gender Dimension: Limited Presence, Significant Impact

Despite differences in local contexts, the comparative analysis reveals a common pattern across the three districts: the limited effective representation of women in community mediation processes related to water conflicts. Where women's participation existed, it was often confined to marginal or consultative roles, without meaningful involvement in decision-making or solution design.

However, the analysis clearly demonstrates that this exclusion carried tangible costs. Experiences showed that overlooking women's perspectives led to impractical or poorly adapted solutions that failed to reflect daily household and community water-use realities, particularly regarding access arrangements and the distribution of burdens. Conversely, cases in which women were involved—even to a limited extent—showed noticeable improvements in the quality, realism, and implementability of agreements.

The analysis further indicates that the absence of women from decision-making spaces was a key factor undermining the sustainability of several agreements, as it resulted in the neglect of critical conflict dimensions related to daily water use, caregiving roles, and longer-term social impacts. These findings confirm that women's inclusion in mediation pathways should not be viewed merely as an equity or symbolic representation issue, but as a decisive factor in enhancing mediation effectiveness and sustainability.

8.6 Mediation Effectiveness and Sustainability: What Works?

The comparison highlights a set of common factors influencing mediation success or failure:

Success Factors:

- Balanced representation of affected parties.
- Clear rules and well-defined agreements.
- A guarantor role played by local authorities.
- Inclusion of women and vulnerable groups.
- The presence of follow-up mechanisms.

Factors Contributing to Failure:

- Rapid solutions that fail to address root causes.
- Unacknowledged biases.
- Lack of documentation.
- Weak follow-up and implementation.

8.7 Identification of Replicable Mediation Models

Based on the comparative analysis, three replicable local mediation models can be identified:

1. A mediation model for conflicts between host communities and displaced populations.
2. A mediation model for managing multi-party shared water networks.
3. A mediation model for complex, high-pressure conflicts requiring institutional support.

These models provide a foundation for developing training tools and policy interventions grounded in local realities.

8.8 Conclusion

The comparative analysis confirms that community mediation in water-related conflicts is neither a neutral nor a purely technical process. Rather, it is a socio-political pathway that requires deep contextual understanding, conscious management of power imbalances, and genuine inclusion of affected groups.

This section sets the stage for the final conclusions and recommendations, which translate this accumulated knowledge into concrete and actionable steps.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 Overall Conclusion

This study demonstrates that water-related conflicts in the districts of Jabal Habashi, Al-Ma'afer, and Al-Shamayatayn in Taiz Governorate cannot be reduced solely to water scarcity. Rather, they are the result of a complex interaction between resource scarcity, displacement, economic and social power imbalances, and weak local regulatory frameworks for water governance. This structural interdependence confirms that water conflict is fundamentally a contest over influence, equity in distribution, and the ability to shape local decision-making, as much as it is a dispute over a limited resource.

Within this context, community mediation has emerged as a central mechanism for containing water-related conflicts and preventing their escalation into more violent forms, drawing on local legitimacy and social relationship networks. However, the study's findings clearly indicate that the effectiveness of such mediation remains limited when it is practiced without a deep contextual analysis and an explicit consideration of power dynamics, or when it is reduced to rapid settlements that fail to address root causes or ensure the sustainability of agreements.

The findings show that community mediation:

- Plays an important role in reducing the intensity of conflicts and preventing their escalation into open violence.
- Is directly influenced by existing social, economic, and power relations.
- Becomes more effective and equitable when conflict-affected groups—particularly women and displaced populations—are meaningfully integrated into decision-making processes, not merely consulted.
- Fails or remains short-lived when conflicts are treated as isolated incidents rather than as manifestations of structural drivers, and when clear follow-up and implementation mechanisms are absent.

Accordingly, the study underscores that strengthening community mediation in water-related conflicts requires a deliberate shift from ad hoc interventions toward systematic and comprehensive approaches. Such approaches must link context-based analysis, the management of power imbalances, conflict-sensitive mediation pathways, and operational water management solutions, alongside institutional support that ensures follow-up and sustainability. This transition constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for enabling local communities to manage water conflicts more equitably and effectively over the medium and long term.

9.2 Strategic Recommendations

The following recommendations are grounded in the analytical evidence and field findings of the study and aim to translate lessons learned from community mediation experiences into practical and implementable actions, while taking into account the specificity of the local context in Taiz Governorate and the complexity of water-related conflicts therein.

9.2.1 Recommendations at the Community and Local Mediator Level

1. Strengthen the capacities of local mediators in conflict analysis and conflict-sensitive mediation facilitation, including conscious engagement with power imbalances, multi-party conflicts, and the intersection of social and economic dimensions of water disputes.
2. Ensure the systematic and meaningful inclusion of women in water-related mediation processes, both as participants and as facilitators, in order to integrate their practical knowledge and household-level needs into solution design and enhance the quality and sustainability of agreements.
3. Clearly document mediation agreements in accessible and understandable formats for all parties, specifying obligations, responsibilities, and follow-up mechanisms, thereby reducing the risk of misunderstandings or withdrawal from commitments.
4. Promote community awareness of the importance of equitable water distribution rules and cost-sharing arrangements through local dialogue initiatives that encourage transparency and rebuild trust among disputing parties.

9.2.2 Recommendations at the Local Authority Level

1. Activate the role of local authorities as neutral guarantors of community mediation agreements, without engaging as biased parties to the conflict, thereby strengthening community trust in resolution pathways.
2. Support the establishment or strengthening of local water management committees based on clear standards of representation and accountability, while ensuring the inclusion of conflict-affected groups, including women and displaced populations.
3. Systematically link mediation outcomes to operational solutions, such as regulating pumping schedules, improving network maintenance, and controlling pricing, in order to translate social agreements into practical and implementable arrangements.
4. Enhance coordination with local and international organizations to avoid duplication of interventions and ensure complementarity of efforts and sustainability of results.

9.2.3 Recommendations at the Organizational and Donor Level

1. Invest in building local mediation capacities as a cost-effective preventive tool compared to emergency responses to escalating conflicts.
2. Design conflict-sensitive interventions that account for displacement dynamics, power imbalances, and the unintended consequences of technical water interventions.
3. Support the integration of gender considerations into water resource management and mediation programs as a core effectiveness factor, rather than as a symbolic or add-on component.
4. Strengthen monitoring and learning mechanisms to enable medium-term assessment of mediation outcomes and adaptive programming based on lessons learned.

9.3 Short-Term Implementation Roadmap (90 Days – 6 Months)

Timeframe	Action	Responsible Entity
0–90 days	Train local mediators using the mediation simulation guide	Local organizations with international support
0–90 days	Review and document existing mediation agreements	Local committees
3–6 months	Integrate women into water management committees	Local authorities
3–6 months	Develop follow-up mechanisms for mediation agreements	Local authorities and partners

9.4 Added Value of the Study

This study offers added value at three complementary levels:

- **Knowledge-based:** Through documenting and analyzing local mediation experiences in an under-documented context, while unpacking conflict dynamics, power relations, and displacement.
- **Practical:** By developing a community mediation simulation guide grounded in field realities and suitable for training and capacity-building purposes.
- **Policy-oriented:** By providing practical and actionable recommendations that support decision-makers and donors in designing more effective and sustainable interventions.

9.5 Final Remarks

The study confirms that addressing water-related conflicts in Taiz Governorate requires more than technical solutions or short-term interventions. It necessitates a comprehensive approach that recognizes community mediation as a complex socio-political process and supports it through regulatory and institutional frameworks that enhance equity and sustainability.

With its in-depth analysis, distilled lessons, and applied models, this report constitutes a practical reference that can inform the development of more effective future interventions for managing water conflicts in Taiz and in comparable contexts within Yemen and beyond.

