

# Peaceful lives: Gender balanced dispute resolution

Around the world, including in Belgian and other European Muslim communities, many families seek the counsel of local religious and community leaders when facing issues within their families and communities, putting pressure on such actors to provide adequate and gender equitable resolution and/or advice – a pressure compounded by the fact that many imams and community actors are inadequately equipped to facilitate healthy conflict resolution because of a lack of training in the conflict resolution field.

## CATEGORY

[Conflict Resolution](#)

## LOCATION

[Belgium](#)

## WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE OR NEED YOUR PROJECT WILL ADDRESS AND WHAT INNOVATIVE METHODS WILL YOU EMPLOY?

### Describe the specific need or challenge that your team will address with this project

Around the world, including in Belgian and other European Muslim communities, many families seek the counsel of local religious and community leaders when facing issues within their families and communities, putting pressure on such actors to provide adequate and gender equitable resolution and/or advice – a pressure compounded by the fact that many imams and community actors are inadequately equipped to facilitate healthy conflict resolution because of a lack of training in the conflict resolution field.

### Briefly describe the specific solution or approach to address the need or challenge and explain why it is innovative

The program, designed to teach how procedural fairness and other needs of disputing parties – with a special focus on women and youth – can be adequately met in healthy conflict resolution, is innovative in combining notions stemming from the field of conflict resolution, international human rights and national (family) law with a focus on Islamic principles of justice, fairness, and equality, making it particularly useful and relevant – and also more efficient – for community actors such as imams and other Muslim professionals, addressing an urgent and unmet need.

### How will the project impact your community? What changes (in people, institutions, attitudes, practices) do you think you will see?

The project, through the development of conflict resolution training for local imams, mosque mediators and other community leaders from around the country, will have a great impact on many families, men and women, young and old. Recent empirical research in Belgium among Muslim families shows that the vast majority of local community and/or religious leaders are aware of the need for more adequate modes of dispute resolution. Existing training in this field is often expensive and moreover insensitive to the particularities of community mediation and the specific social issues and challenges faced by many Muslim families today. The project's goal is to empower local actors and leaders to become agents of change through their peacebuilding role within the country's Muslim communities and in this way induce a profound social transformation, especially in the attitudes towards women and youth, towards greater openness to social change, gender equity, and civic engagement.

## WHO WILL BE INVOLVED?

### MEET THE TEAM

Project owner

[Kim Lecoyer](#)  
[Belgium](#)  
[Citizen Exchanges](#)

Project members

Manage members  
[Wafae Bouzegta](#)  
[Belgium](#)  
[Citizen Exchanges](#)  
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[Soumia El Majdoub](#)  
[Belgium](#)  
[International Visitor Leadership Program \(IVLP\)](#)  
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[Michael Privot](#)  
[Belgium](#)  
[International Visitor Leadership Program \(IVLP\)](#)  
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[Lieselot Verdonck](#)  
[Belgium](#)  
[Fulbright Student Program](#)  
[\[remove from project\]](#)

[Shekina Ghani](#)  
[Belgium](#)  
[Civil Society \(Citizen Exchanges\)](#)  
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[Hirem Pervaz](#)  
[Belgium](#)  
[International Visitor Leadership Program \(IVLP\)](#)  
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[Sami Zemni](#)  
[Belgium](#)  
[International Visitor Leadership Program \(IVLP\)](#)  
[\[remove from project\]](#)

[Birsen Taspinar](#)  
[Belgium](#)  
[Citizen Exchanges](#)  
[\[remove from project\]](#)

[Laila Al-Zwaini](#)  
[Netherlands](#)  
[International Visitor Leadership Program \(IVLP\)](#)  
[\[remove from project\]](#)

[Rajae Bouzegta](#)  
[Belgium](#)  
[Citizen Exchanges](#)  
[\[remove from project\]](#)

### **Beneficiaries: who are your target groups (or communities) and how many people will directly benefit from your project?**

Target groups are local actors, such as imams (potentially) involved in advice giving and dispute resolution activities within their communities. In total, 2 or 3 groups of min. 20-25 participants will be selected to take part in a pilot conflict resolution training, based on their motivation to acquire dispute resolution tools and their potential to become agents of social change in their respective communities, but also based on their working area and the diversity of their public, in order to reach the widest possible range of Muslim families. Hence, given the frequent solicitation of these actors by community members, the project team expects that at least a 2000 families, and even much more individuals, might benefit from the pilot program within a year after completion, through the enhanced conflict resolution competences of the trained participants, including the crucial ability to identify situations where mediation is inappropriate, particularly in cases of domestic violence.

### **Local partners**

The project team will work with several organizations or individual partners that have a particular expertise and can contribute to building a strong curriculum tailored to the needs of the participants and their 'clients'. Several partners are already identified, other agreements shall be finalized in the initiation phase of the project, based on needed profiles. Partners for future implementation beyond this pilot project shall also be involved (e.g. institutional partners).

NGO's 'Karamah: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights' and their Brussels based European branch 'Karamah-EU': Last year Karamah ran a training program called the Muslim Mediation Initiative in the United States. They are willing to share their expertise and train the project team (mainly through distance learning) and help us prepare the training materials, especially with regard to how general dispute resolution, mediation and intervention in conflict situation can be tailored to the needs of Muslim leaders and mediators and their clients.

Hoger Instituut voor Gezinswetenschappen (Odisee – Catholic University of Leuven) is an independent higher education institute for family sciences. They will provide mediation, family law and other experts, trainers as well as training venues.

Damien d'Urse: lawyer and experienced intercultural mediator, author of a book about culture sensitive mediation based on empirical research with (mainly) Muslim families, can contribute to the project as a trainer (train-the-trainer and direct training of program participants).

Several local mosques, community centres and (youth, women, ...) organizations, ... : disseminate advertisement about the program.

### **Alumni team**

#### **Project Implementers:**

Kim Lecoyer (Alumna, BE, Karamah EU), Researcher, socio-legal scholar human rights, religion and gender: project leader, curriculum expert and trainer

Rajae Bouzegta (Alumna, BE, Karamah EU): project coordinator

Wafae Bouzegta (Alumna, BE, Karamah EU), Lawyer: curriculum expert and trainer

Birsen Taspinar (Alumna, BE), Psychologist, therapist: curriculum expert and trainer

Naima Lafrarchi (BE), Researcher religious sciences & education: curriculum expert and trainer

Sakina Ghani, Yasmina Akhandaf, (Alumnae, BE) and other Karamah EU team members will offer additional (logistic, administrative, financial...) support.

#### **Project Advisors (Advisory Board):**

Ahmed Bahhodh (BE),

Soumia El Majdoub (BE),

Hirem Pervaz (BE),

Michael Privot (BE),

Lieselot Verdonck (BE),

Laila Al-Zwaini (NL),

Famile Arslan (NL).

**Proposed Project Dates:** September 01, 2015 - August 31, 2016

## HOW AND WHEN WILL YOU IMPLEMENT YOUR PROJECT?

### Implementing Plan and Timeline

#### Months 1-3 (September - November 2015): Project initiation & implementation phase

- Kick-off meeting(s) with all team members and local partners (see above);
- Work out detailed time-line and define modalities of partnerships in collaboration with local partners;
- Identify current capacity and particular needed human resources (within and outside team), especially in terms of trainers;
- Define the evaluation criteria of the training program.

#### Months 4-6 (December 2015 - February 2016): Training Curriculum Development & Implementation of the Pilot Program

- Project meetings with the curriculum development experts and external partners with particular needed expertise;
- Elaborate detailed training program, including identifying all trainers;
- Prepare promotional materials to advertise about the program and call for participants;
- Conduct, where needed, a 'train-the-trainer' program in order for team members to become program trainers themselves.

#### Month 3-5 (November 2015 - January 2016): Communication campaign and registration of program participants

- Advertise about the conflict resolution training program via several (social) media and local partners;
- Registration and selection of participants based on defined criteria (see above).

#### Months 6-10 (February - June): Pilot Training Program Roll-out

- Conduct conflict resolution training modules in several regions of Belgium (Flanders, Brussels, Wallonia).

#### Month 11-12 (July - August 2016): Program evaluation & final project reporting

- Evaluation of the pilot program, final project reporting to the Advisory Board and drafting of the project evaluation report;
- Prepare program continuation: establish new partnerships for further implementation of the training program, develop train-the-trainer programs for interested organizations, fundseeking (grantwriting, institutional partnerships,...) for future training.

### Communication Plan

The training program will be advertised through social media, printed flyers, and information campaigns in community associations (e.g. give a lecture about the topic of community conflict resolution and inform audience about the upcoming training program) and a targeted emailing addressed at potential beneficiaries. In the final phase and the aftermath of the project, the team aims to promote the outcomes and achievements of the project to the public, mainly through a communication event closing the program's first year.

### Evaluation

All program participants shall respond to a pre- and post-program (online) survey, allowing participants to self-evaluate their needs, competencies and acquired skills. All program trainers will be asked to fill in an online self-assessment tool and also evaluate the program curriculum itself. As from the second year of the program, if time and budget allows, interviews

and/or focusgroups with 'clients' of participating community mediators may also be conducted to measure their satisfaction (post-program evaluation, after a period of time allowing program participants to implement their newly acquired skills and views in practice).

The project team shall draft a final project evaluation report in which less easily measurable effects of the program are also evaluated. Team members and program trainers, based on discussion with participants to the pilot program, will attempt to evaluate for instance how enhanced conflict resolution skills in the community yield more peaceful and healthier families and how this may contribute to prevent radicalization and other social ills communities may be struggling with.

### **Sustainability**

The initial year of the project shall allow the project implementers to :

- Develop a training curriculum;
- Prepare adequate training tools and learning materials;
- Assemble a team of specialized trainers (project team members for some);
- Acquire the expertise of conducting the training program with the selected participants;
- And also acquire the expertise to conduct train-the-trainer programs for partner organizations interested to pursue our efforts through their own conflict resolution programs.

This way, the training program can be continued and improved where necessary, in various aspects:

- The program can be taken, if needed, to a more advanced level with the participants from the pilot training program;
- The training program can be reconducted with new participants in Belgium and/or elsewhere, through a follow-up project involving alumni from the Netherlands and/or other (European) countries for instance and through institutional partnerships;
- The developed curriculum can also be further implemented – in collaboration with various new local and institutional partners and it can also be adapted to specific target groups (Arabic and Turkish language training for instance).

## **TOTAL FUNDING REQUESTED**

\$25,000.00

### **PROPOSAL DOCUMENT:**

[Download budget](#)