

CHINA



From left: Ma Youli (right) guides a villager to sign a settlement agreement in “Mr Ma’s Mediation Room” in Yiyuan county, Shandong province, on Nov 15. Ma and two judges from the People’s Court of Yiyuan county (second and third from right) tell villagers how to fill out a standard contract on Nov 25. Ma raises legal consciousness among residents in Baixiaoshui village in Yiyuan on Nov 23. PHOTOS BY ZHAO DONGSHAN AND YOU KUIKUI / FOR CHINA DAILY



Ma directs a villager to sign a settlement agreement at a construction site in Yiyuan on Nov 24.



Ma receives a villager in his mediation room on Nov 15.



Ma shares legal knowledge with his fellow villagers in Pianliangshan village on Nov 24.

# The man who makes peace

After years of resolving village disputes, trusted farmer tasked by local court with employing his skills

By ZHAO DONGSHAN and YOU KUIKUI  
For China Daily

Ma Youli is a 64-year-old farmer from Pianliangshan village in Yiyuan county, Shandong province. For over 30 years, he has volunteered as a mediator to help fellow villagers settle different kinds of disputes and is considered the village’s peacemaker.

From problems as small as family quarrels to ones as big as property disputes, Ma visits those involved to talk with them and does his best to resolve the conflicts. Under the motto of “leaving no conflict for children to resolve”, he has helped settle some 1,500 dis-

putes over the years.

To make better use of his abilities as a community leader, the People’s Court of Yiyuan county has opened a space for his work called “Mr. Ma’s Mediation Room” and set up a hotline in Yanya township, which administers the village, in 2020. Ma has since become the court’s special mediator for people in the area. Every day, he drives to different villages to talk with plaintiffs and tries to settle disputes as quickly as possible.

Since the room was set up, Ma has helped settle 130 civil disputes. Last year, he was listed as one of the top 10 mediators in Zibo city, which administers Yiyuan.



Ma chats with villagers in Xixiaoshui village in Yiyuan on Nov 23.



Ma tries to settle a dispute in the house of a family in Pianliangshan village on Nov 15.