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Morocco launches new project for settling domestic disputes

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The Moroccan branch of the organisation Search for Common Ground launched a new project last week to provide mediation services to families embroiled in domestic disputes. The organisation's Country Director Abou El Mahassine Fassi-Fihri speaks to Magharebia about the project's vision.

By Naoufel Cherkaoui for Magharebia in Rabat - 11/10/07

The Moroccan branch of the NGO Search for Common Ground (SFCG) began an eight-month mediation project last week in co-operation with the Moroccan Association for Combating Violence against Women (AMVF). The groups seek to create a mechanism for mediating family disputes through a call centre operated by the Casablanca-based AMVF. If the trial is successful, the programme will later be extended to related civil associations' call centres.

SFCG's Moroccan Director, Abou El Mahassine Fassi-Fihri, told Magharebia, "The project seeks to boost the institutional capabilities of call centres which aim to help solve family problems. The project also seeks to raise awareness about the availability of such services, and to institute mediators and provide their training in order to ensure continuity for the project."



Fassi-Fihri added that one aim of mediation is to buy time and to avoid the cost of legal action. "In the event of a family dispute, the mediator can help find solutions without resorting to the courts, which requires money and time, during which the family problems can become more complicated."

[Getty Images] Abou El Mahassine Fassi-Fihri said the project focuses on providing mediation services over the telephone.

"The idea was put in place two years ago," Fassi-Fihri continued, "under the partnership between our organisation and the Ministry of Justice, which dates back to 2004. The partnership was intended to found a legal and institutional framework for the practice of mediation in general, including commercial mediation."

He said the family mediation programme is not confined to violence against women, but will extend to all family problems and disputes and attempt to solve them quickly and amicably.

The first group of mediators, including call centre staff and practicing lawyers and psychologists, are set to begin training in November with a six-day programme offering theoretical and practical instruction. During the process, trainees will receive interactive training that includes role-playing exercises with professional mediators.

Fassi-Fihri said he believes other organisations will be encouraged to take part once they see the AMVF benefitting from the new mediators.

"The general aim of the project is to enhance the capabilities of call centres that are engaged in the field of violence against women," said Saadia Ouadah, AMVF member and co-ordinator of the SFCG

project. "This will happen by boosting the application of the legal framework, represented in the Family Code."

Ouadah added that the mediation mechanism conforms to the general philosophy of the Family Code, which emphasises the creation of balanced families. She said also that family mediation is only one of many ways to realise healthy domestic lives.

"The project will run over eight months, during which the Search for Common Ground organisation will be responsible for selecting the mediators and providing their training. At the end we will hold a press conference to launch a "mediator handbook", Ouadah said.

Ouadah said successful mediators "must be good at communication techniques. He or she must be able and efficient in bridging differences, and must also be impartial."