

MediAction Baseline Report: Rabat-Yaacoub El Mansour

April 2008

I. General Context of the Assessment Phase of the project

MediAction is a 24-month project that aims at developing and strengthening the MediAction initiative as well as at expanding the initiative to other regions in Morocco. The first year will aim at launching the experience in Rabat and potentially in Marrakech. During the second year, Search for Common Ground will roll out the project to other cities (potentially Fes, Sale, and Tangiers) and ensure sustainability.

With the support of the British Embassy, and in collaboration with the National Initiative for Human Development (contribution of 250,000 MAD), Search for Common Ground (SFCG) has been awarded a grant of £185,809 to implement a 24-month project (January 2008 – December 2009) to support the creation of community mediation centres in disadvantaged areas across Morocco to promote the peaceful resolution of conflict through the empowerment and training of 125 youth leaders in leadership, community conflict management, and non-violent communication.

The goal of the Youth Community & Mediation Centres (YCMC) assessment phase was to secure stakeholder buy-in. In this context, SFCG staff met with the representatives of the Rabat INDH steering committee in order to formally present the project and confirm local support. In coordination with the Rabat INDH steering committee, SFCG staff first identified one district in Rabat who agreed to support the initiative (Yaacoub El Mansour), after which the local communities deemed to have the maximum benefit from the program's implementation were determined. The Rabat INDH steering committee confirmed that it will provide furnishings and other material assistance to the YCMC.

The assessment phase included meetings with local authorities, community leaders and potential partners in the selected areas of Yaacoub El Mansour. Despite the short delays experienced by our team in conducting the assessment phase, an excellent understanding of the project as well as a strong buy-in of the local stakeholders has been firmly established in Yaacoub El Mansour. This allowed for a smooth implementation of the baseline survey in the first community of the MediAction project : Yaacoub El Mansour community in Rabat.

II. Executive Summary of the baseline survey

The baseline study in Yaacoub El Mansour included interviews with a cross-section of local stakeholders, including local youth, educators and community members. Data was collected from an assortment of stakeholders in the community in order to create a baseline against which future program evaluation indicators will be measured. The response to the new project was overwhelmingly positive though individuals noted the real challenges facing their neighbourhood.

Baseline data was collected through intensive interviews and focus groups with potential partners, educators and other community leaders in Yaacoub El Mansour. Additionally, youth and community member opinions were solicited via questionnaires, in the former case via a written survey at a local secondary school and in the latter case, administered orally in the local market (souk). The findings and related program recommendations are summarized in this report. The format of face-to-face interviews and focus groups enhances relationship building with future local partners. It also allows for the collection of rich qualitative data against which mid-term and final evaluations can be measured. Questionnaires were used in the baseline phase to provide initial perspectives from potential beneficiaries of the project. A representative sample of local students indicated interest in and need for youth community mediation centres. Most of the youth surveyed described themselves as having desire and potential to help mitigate conflict in their community.

Local leaders, educators and youth association leaders enthusiastically welcomed the development of Youth Community Mediation activities. They confirmed their willingness to partner with SFCG to make these activities a reality. The baseline study confirmed the willingness of local partners to participate in an awareness raising campaign to ensure that community members understand the goals of community mediation and so that youth will gain interest and eventually participate in YCMC activities. In all meetings with local leaders, there was unanimous support for raising public awareness in their community about the goals and benefits of a YCMC.

"Conflicts with youth... start simple, relate to material resources while other conflicts are non-material — age and social factors determine escalation.

Ignorance is main reason for social conflict and violence. If a youth community mediation centre is created it will be a big help—this is perfect timing for the project and will fill a gap."

– *youth centre director in Yaacoub El Mansour*

"I think mediation should be in Morocco because of the escalation of violence and terrorism, people in this neighbourhood are at risk for this."

– *local youth association president*

Local leaders and partners also agreed to participate in the proposed consensus building seminar, to be organised in the coming weeks in Rabat, which will include representatives of the INDH, the targeted local municipality of Yaacoub Al Mansour, the Ministry of youth, the Ministry of social development, youth NGOs representatives and other stakeholders.

III. Methodology

Baseline Study Objectives

In April 2008 interviews were conducted with a cross-section of stakeholders in the neighbourhood of Yaacoub El Mansour, Rabat. Participants included educators, civil society activists, youth and other community members, which combined provide a diverse sample representative of Yaacoub's demographic make-up.

The purpose of the YCMC baseline study was to collect baseline data for future monitoring and evaluation of YCMC. The baseline study allows SFCG to clearly understand the needs of the target beneficiaries and confirm the practicality of their proposed approach to this project. The information gathered in the baseline phase will be used to inform the creation of YCMCs and the program's subsequent activities. The baseline survey was designed to collect information relevant to the primary program objectives.

The baseline study was conducted using a standardized methodology to ensure that future program evaluators can measure the program's effectiveness in meeting its goals and outcomes through comparison of responses to assorted indicators at the outset and end of the project lifeline.

Data collection for this baseline and subsequent Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan includes a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods as different techniques of data collection allows for the most thorough perspective when analyzing findings. In-depth interviews, focus groups and questionnaires were used during the baseline study. These data collection instruments will again be used throughout the project to solicit feedback from community leaders and partners.

Questionnaires will be further utilized to gauge youths' needs once the centers are operational: Once youth leaders have begun staffing YCMC centers, baseline data will also be collected from youth entering the centers for mediation counseling.¹

Monitoring will be conducted throughout the program at periodic intervals. The project's M&E plan includes a mid-term and summative evaluation, or, one that is implemented at the completion of the program. The mid-term evaluation will describe the immediate effects of the YCMC collective activities including changes in attitudes, knowledge of conflict and communication skills of the targeted population.

The combined data collected during various stages of YCMC will be compiled at its conclusion into narrative report detailing of the phenomena of youth conflict management over the course of the 24-month project.

Baseline Study Participants

Baseline study participants were selected following initial assessment missions and focused on potential partners in the local community. The total number of people who provided intensive feedback for the baseline survey is 2 leaders of a youth NGO/clubs, 6 local high school teachers/administrators, 1 middle school director/civil society activist, 15 youth and 8 random community members.

¹ Upon applying for any training or services offered by a center, each youth will be asked to complete a brief written questionnaire in order to identify their current status, training needs, etc.

A. Youth

Youth were interviewed then asked to complete a written questionnaire in order to provide their candid feedback on the presence of positive activities for youth in their community and to offer their self-assessment on issues such as their own positive contributions to their community. Written surveys were completed by 15 students at Abi Houraira high school. Respondents were males and females ranging from 15-18 years. The sample includes a mix of male and female youth all whom live in Yaacoub Al Mansour.

B. Community Members

Additionally, surveys were administered orally to the following cross-section of community members in order to identify individuals' personal experience with mediation and interest in the creation of a local mediation centre. The average age for community member respondents was 33 years old, 6 out of 8 whom described themselves as currently employed. The following information was collected for those community members randomly surveyed in the local souq, including the level of education completed by the survey participant:

- 1) Male, age 32, high school
- 2) Male, age 37, middle school
- 3) Male, age 33, university
- 4) Male, age 40, high school
- 5) Male, age 39, high school
- 6) Female, age 24, middle school
- 7) Female, age 42, high school
- 8) Male, age 24, primary school

C. Local Leaders and NGO Partners

In-depth interviews were conducted with the following: High school Administrators, director of centre, president of a youth NGO, a Middle School Director and self-describe civil society activist and 5 high school teachers. Local leaders and potential NGO partners indicated their support for this initiative both in the substance of their responses to the baseline interviews and in the amount of time they made for the baseline meetings.

Baseline Study Findings

The baseline study findings are presented by two primary stakeholder groups (1) local leaders/partners and (2) youth and community members. Responses are organized by baseline study questions that were used for each stakeholder group.

A. In-depth Interviews and Focus Group

Each interview or focus group last approximately one hour and participants responded to the following questions, among others. Overall, educators and youth NGO leaders said the project will be challenging but is much-needed in their community. Specific responses include:

- *What activities or organizations are you aware of in your community that allow youth to positively contribute to social cohesion?*²

“Various associations in the community conduct programs...focused on financial aid, healthcare and social topic workshops for the underprivileged. Another example includes neighbourhood clean-up projects. The centre offers cultural and sports programs based on youth's free time...there is an I.T. classroom equipped with donated computers.” – Youth centre director

"...it is difficult and hard to say there are 'no activities' -- there are some that do activities for youth ages 18-35...there are sports and arts [programs] a [related] problem is that of group competition." – Youth Assn. president, who agreed that the proposed centre would be good supplement to existing programs

- *Based on your understanding of the objectives of this new project, do you think that the development of a youth mediation centre would be good for this community?*³

All of those interviewed agreed that the centre will be a great addition to their community. Specific comments included:

"Yes, of course- creating such a centre will fill out the free time and equip those involved – they should know what mediation is." – Male high school teacher

"Of course [YMC] will be helpful but first it's essential that its mission be made known to the community members. Mediators must be credible, honest and not engage in contradictory behaviours. Awareness must be created before conflicts arise [so that people will then go to YMC]. This [mediation] used to exist in culture of Morocco. – Middle school director

"It is useful as it makes youth invest their time constructively...It will also make them accept one another and accept differences. This kind of projects will coach the youth as it is in harmony with the new culture of human rights and dialogue of civilizations." – Female high school teacher

"Yes it would be beneficial for the community of Yaacoub...it will be hard for mediators- he cannot just interfere and [try to] solve problems immediately. The ground must first be

² Indicator: Percentage of community members who feel that the youth community mediation centres are an activity that contributes to social cohesion.

³ Indicator: Percentage of community leaders who support the development of youth mediation centres.

prepared... [people here] must be convinced of the idea before initiating this... the mediators should not be [from outside this community] not just someone with a degree."

– Youth Assn. President

- *Would you go to the centre and/or encourage your associates/colleagues/neighbors to support the centre?*⁴ All the local leaders and partners interviewed agreed that once centres are operational, they will encourage others to utilize and support them as long as it's "done right."

"Yes...As teachers we mediate to decrease tensions.." – Male high school teacher

"Yes – it will be a space for us teachers to suggest appropriate solutions. In the past we created in this high school a committee of problem-solving / counselling centre but the teachers who started this initiative left the school and the listening centre had to stop its services." – Female high school teacher

"Yes but it involves in believing in something...depends on the mediator. We tend to believe in concrete things e.g. if my neighbour went there and got conflict solved [then I would go]. It all depends on the way [the centre] is initiated." – Youth assn. president

- *How can your organization support the Youth Community Mediation Centre?*

"We can provide classroom for activities, for example, 3-6 times a month the school will offer support in terms of human labour and possibly finance, as long as it benefits youth."

– High school director

"We welcome the idea of partnership, help in the awareness raising process, conducting activities of the project and [facilitating your] getting know to people...contact the local authorities, do statistics, prepare questionnaires, coordinate meetings with illiterate women...Resources and location can be offered—if you want to do a conference in this centre, you're welcome—Centre has a room with capacity for 300 people." – Youth centre director

"As a civil society activist in this community, [I work with people in assorted associations—so I welcome this idea [and will connect SFCG with other civil society actors/ organizations that can support the centre.]" – Middle school director

"Our association represents people of this community so for us it's a win-win...[my] association can give a higher profile to the mediation centre [and educate] the general public." – Youth assn. president

- *What types of conflicts are present in your community? Other additional comments?*

"Violence—in average day to day life we hear people fighting in the neighbourhood and this is then brought into the school... Conflicts start simply but once they leave school, they escalate and can involve weapon." – high school director

"Character and leadership qualities are very important and mediators should be dealing with people from their social class- same neighbourhood—to solve those conflicts but conversely in such cases [the mediator] might not be neutral." – High school director

⁴ Indicator: Percentage who will encourage others to go to mediation centre to resolve their conflicts.

"We try to practice peaceful [conflict resolution] inside the centre—outside the centre only the authorities can intervene. Be sure to include the immigrant community members as there are a lot of Africans here." ---Youth centre director

One local leader offered view that there is culture that people think they can do harm to each other if they know someone powerful. He commented, "this is a good initiative especially in the current environment because there is an escalation in conflicts, especially social conflict...it will be challenging in the Yaacoub district. [This] idea is necessary and can help build trust between neighbours. It is critical to success of YCM re: first preparing the ground-make people more aware- it's a good initiative but requires a lot of effort." – Middle school director

"I think mediation should be in Morocco because of the escalation of violence and terrorism, people in this neighbourhood are at risk for this." – Youth assn. president

Questionnaire Responses

Self-assessments for youth and community members, in the form of questionnaires were designed to solicit candid feedback related to youths' current capacities and gaps in areas of: leadership; self-esteem; community conflict management; mediation and non violent communication skills. Indicators for which baseline data was collected include:

- Percentage who believe that youth play an important role in promoting peacebuilding values (e.g. non-violence and mediation) in their community.
- Percentage who have benefited from training on conflict mitigation techniques.

Overall, youth surveyed indicated a high level of potential regarding youth's current role as peace builders in their community. The goal of the project is to intervene at this level so these findings are very useful in offering a perspective on the starting point. Significantly, all of the youth and community members surveyed indicated a desire to be positive contributors to their community, which confirms that this project's successful implementation will fill much-needed gaps in the lives of young people living in this disadvantaged area of Morocco.

Questionnaire

When asked, "What activities or organizations in your community allow youth to positively contribute to social cohesion?"⁵ All youth surveyed listed Al Amal ("hope") association as one example of positive organization/activity-provider for youth. Other organizations cited by youth and community members included Al Moustakbal ("future") association, Shames ("sun") association, Sharq & Gharbe ("East & West") assn., Mountada Al Mouwatana, Nour ("light") association, Riayate Atoufoula ("childhood care") association and the Cooperation for Women's Rights.

Randomly selected community members offered positive assessments of those youth-focused organizations currently present in their neighbourhood, while youth appear more sceptical that such organizations truly have their interest at heart. Overall, the responses to this question

⁵ In the final evaluation, if the YCMC is noted as a positive contributor, it will demonstrate the measurable impact of the program.

supported the conclusion that a constructive mediation-centred project such as what is proposed will be welcome by the Yaacoub community.

Youth and community members surveyed provided their feedback related to the program's overarching goals:

- Fifty percent of youth surveyed believe that youth play an important role in promoting non-violence solutions to problems that they encounter in school, at home or in their neighborhood. Community members responded more positively, with 86% agreeing that young people today have an important role to play.
- Youth appeared rather negative about current role of youth NGOs, with 86% disagreeing with the idea that 'youth NGOs are playing a central and important role in the community'.ⁱ In contrast, 100% of community members surveyed do believe that organizations focused on youth have a positive impact.
- Regarding the proposed creation of a youth community mediation center, more than 90% of all youth and community members surveyed that this would be good for their community.
- Around 25% of youth said they have sought 'mediation services' at some point in the past. Of community members surveyed, only 12.5% had done so.

Participants were asked to respond to whether or not they have any experience with mediation keeping the following definition in mind, "Mediation in this sense includes informal conflicts between friends, family members, community members as well as formal mediation experiences."

- Just over 25% of youth said yes, they had some experience 'mediating' and cited incidents when they had mitigated a conflict amongst friends. Community members responded 50-50%, with half citing examples of times they have acted as a mediator, also in situations primarily related to conflicts amongst friends or families.

All of the people surveyed demonstrated some degree of potential as someone who is willing to help mitigate conflict in their community:

- *"I make positive contributions to my community."* 80% of youth and 100% of community members agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.
- *"I am a leader amongst my peers, family and/or community."* Just 40% of youth agreed with this idea, while 100% of community members agreed or strongly agreed.
- *"I would like to take more initiative in working for change in my community."* 80% of youth 100% of community members agreed or strongly agreed.

Baseline Study Summary

Local leaders and educators provided their view that local youth are struggling in this community and welcome the creation of a Youth Community Mediation Centre. When discussing the possibility of youth serving as mediators at YCMCs, one local leader summed

it up by saying, ' Youth have energy and leadership ability and try to do the best job—older people might get tired...youth lead by example and pass message on—a young person will know strengths and weaknesses of his peers. If you make youth feel confident and support their efforts, they will succeed. Other local leaders' comments echoed this sentiment-- all baseline study participants who were interviewed offered constructive suggestions for how to utilize this program to enhance youth's conflict management skills and agreed that, if implemented properly, this program will greatly benefit their community at large.

Program Implications

The baseline study confirms the need for conflict management skills training for youth in the selected area. One youth association leader offered the opinion, "...even if we say mediation is an old practice [in Morocco], it does not exist at all now. There is a tradition that if two people fight and another intervenes, once those two people make-up, the person who intervened is viewed negatively." This observation confirms the presumed need that youth must be equipped with conflict management skills to help them analyze the best response to conflicts and when and how to intervene in a way that makes their community stronger overall.

Youth and community members who participated in the baseline survey demonstrated a strong desire to build their capacity to be "positive contributors" to their community. Moreover, local leaders, educators and NGO staff are enthusiastic to partner with SFCG and the British Embassy to create public awareness about community mediation and create the Youth Community Mediation Centre.

During the course of the baseline study, Social Centre staff and NGO leaders voiced their opinion that the proposed YCMC is a welcomed new initiative, with one educator saying, we are highly in need of this project. The middle school director noted that, as he is also a civil society activist in this community, he works with a myriad of local people in assorted associations and he is happy to connect SFCG with other civil society actors/ organizations that can support the centre. Numerous local leaders suggested that the immigrant citizens within their community should not be overlooked in such a program.

All stakeholders who were interviewed agreed on the need for a well-planned awareness campaign prior to initiating youth-focused activities. One commented on the importance of both laying ground work and evaluating success in order to encourage others to use the centre, saying: "If there is such a centre, its mission should first be disseminated- the centre should not be opened without first laying the groundwork—at the end of its first year a report should be issued that says what kind of conflicts were mediated and how they were resolved, any cases not resolved and related challenges in addressing them." Those local leaders and prospective partners interviewed have excellent contacts throughout the community so further securing their buy-in through this dialogue was a significant outcome of conducting the baseline study, in addition to its goal of collecting data for future evaluations.

The next steps are for SFCG, in close collaboration with the local INDH steering committee and the local stakeholders, to facilitate a consensus-building seminar that will allow the sharing of the same vision at the local level.

After the seminar SFCG will start facilitating the strategic planning and capacity-building workshops along with the awareness raising campaigns, as described in the SFCG first year work plan. The official opening of the YCMC is programmed for Fall 2008.

Appendix A

Rabat -Yaacoub Al Mansour Baseline Study Interviews were conducted with the following:

8 April 2008

- 1) Abi Houraira high school:
 - (a) Director
 - (b) English teacher
 - (c) Supervisor of teachers
- 2) El Amal youth club director

10 April 2008

- 1) Middle school director & civil society activist
- 2) Youth association president (Maillage Network)
- 3) Focus group with Abi Houraira high school teachers was composed of:
 - a. 1 female professor of history/geography of 20 years
 - b. 1 male teacher of history/geography of 25 years
 - c. 1 male teacher of math of 24 years and
 - d. 1 female teacher of Islamic education of 37 years

Between 8 and 10 April 2008, questionnaires were completed by 15 students at Abi Houraira high school. Questionnaires were administered orally to another 8 random community members in the Yaacoub souq.

Appendix B

Local Leaders and Partners - Youth Community Mediation Center Interview Questions (given orally)

NAME:

AFFILIATION:

1. What activities or organizations are you aware of in your community that allow youth to positively contribute to social cohesion?⁶
2. Based on your understanding of the objectives of this new project, do you think that the development of a youth mediation centre would be good for this community?⁷
3. How do you envision your organization/school/business could partner with us to support the centre in your community?
4. Would you encourage your associates/colleagues/neighbours to go to and/or support the centre in other ways?⁸
5. What are some of the challenges for conflict management in this area (example conflicts)?
6. Additional comments:

⁶ Indicator: Percentage of community members who feel that the youth community mediation centres are an activity that contributes to social cohesion.

⁷ Indicator: Percentage of community leaders who support the development of youth mediation centres.

⁸ Percentage of community members who encourage others to go to mediation centre to resolve their conflicts.

Appendix C

Youth and Community Members Questionnaire

Age: _____ Male/Female: _____

Education Level:⁹ _____

Open-ended question:

1. What activities or organizations in your community allow youth to positively contribute to social cohesion?ⁱⁱ

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.....
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.....

Close-ended questions:

Close-ended questions should all be answered according to this scale:

1 (strongly agree) 2 (agree) 3 (strongly disagree) 4 (disagree) 0 (No Comment)

2. I believe that young people today often play an important role in promoting non-violence solutions to problems encountered in school, at home, or in their neighbourhoods.ⁱⁱⁱ
3. I believe that youth NGOs are playing a central and important role in the community.^{iv}
4. I think that the development of youth mediation centres would be good for this community.^v
5. I would consider going to a local mediation centre to resolve a conflict.^{vi}
6. I have visited a mediation centre or otherwise sought mediation services.^{vii}

If you answered yes to no. 6, when and where did you utilize mediation services?

"Answer questions # 7 & 8 with following definition in mind:

Mediation in this sense includes informal conflicts between friends, family members, community members as well as formal mediation experiences."

7. I have experience mediating.
8. (If yes to no. 7, how many cases have you mediated?)
9. Regarding your role the community^{viii}:
 - a. I make positive contributions to my community.
 - b. I am a leader amongst my peers, family and/or community
 - c. I would like to take more initiative in working for change in my community.
10. I have previously received some kind of training related to mediation^{ix}
11. Are you currently working in internship, other unpaid work, or in paid position?

⁹ "Education Level" requested only for community members who were randomly selected for the survey.

If you are employed, where are you currently working?

- A. private sector
 - a. Business related (marketing, sales, other ____)
 - b. Technical (information technology, website design, other__)
 - c. Skilled trade, type_____
- B. Nonprofit organization
 - a. NGO
 - b. Other__
- C. Family business
 - a. Shop
 - b. Trade
 - c. Agriculture
 - d. Other_____
- D. Public sector
 - a. Local government
 - b. School
 - c. Other_____

Appendix D

Corresponding Indicators for Youth and Community Members Questionnaire

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- ⁱ % who believe that youth NGOs are playing a central and important role in the community.
 - ⁱⁱ % who believe that youth community mediation centres are reinforcing social cohesiveness.
 - ⁱⁱⁱ % who believe that youth play an important role in promoting a culture of peace, non-violence and mediation.
 - ^{iv} % who believe that youth NGOs are playing a central and important role in the community.
 - ^v % who support the development of youth mediation centers.
 - ^{vi} % who are willing to go to the mediation centers to resolve their conflicts.
 - ^{vii} % who have utilized mediation centers or services in the past year
 - ^{viii} % who are report a change in their self esteem, leadership skills and their perception of their role in the community.
 - ^{viii} % who are trained involved in conflict prevention activities on the ground.