
Search for Common Ground - Morocco Key Findings from 2009 External Evaluation

In collaboration with the Moroccan local government, Search for Common Ground (SFCG) was awarded a grant of \$404,546 from USAID Morocco to implement a 19-month project (January 2008 to July 2009) which will establish four Youth Community Mediation Centers (YCMC) in Casablanca and Tetouan. The Tetouan aspect of the project is an expansion of the Casablanca project and was funded 10 months after Casablanca. The project aims to mitigate community conflicts by constructively engaging youth in local democratic and economic development processes through the work of the youth community and mediation centers. To implement this project, Search for Common Ground has partnered with a number of local associations in each city, such as the National Delegates of Education and ANAPEC and is conducting the project in collaboration with the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH).

EVALUATION SCOPE

The midterm evaluation assesses the achievements of the project to date with respect to its objectives and the achievement of its outcomes. It also assesses external factors beyond the control of the project that affect negatively or positively the project. Special emphasis is placed on the degree to which the project has succeeded in carrying out the activities outlined in the logical framework and how the implementation of these activities led to the desired changes as measured by the selected indicators of success. Also the midterm evaluation explores the challenges and potential opportunities for improving the project.

The evaluation focuses mainly on the changes in perceptions among the youth participants, non-youth participants and the community members of the roles played by young social mediators and social mediation centres in mitigating communal conflicts to reduce tensions, and in increasing economic opportunities and the economic engagement of marginalized youth in the target communities.

KEY FINDINGS

The project is moving steadily and effectively towards its objectives. Despite the positive outcomes underscored above, it is however too early to determine the long term impact it has had on the target beneficiaries. What is obvious is that project activities have positively influenced the communities and local stakeholders on the value and importance of alternative means to dispute resolution, win-win conflict approaches and interest based resolution techniques are beneficial for urban communities grappling with youth violence, extremism and social disenfranchisement. There is an increased ownership of the concept and practice of community mediation and many local stakeholders think of it as a new paradigm for effecting social change. Essentially, the project has been effective in changing perceptions of the community and stakeholders. The concrete outputs in terms of improved capacity to resolve disputes and facilitate access to and create economic opportunities are expected to take place later in the project and will require more concerted action.

Changes in Knowledge and Attitude were noted in this midterm evaluation:

- Strong results were achieved in terms of changes in the awareness and attitudes in the trained group of young social mediators. These changes are largely related to the relevance of community mediation and the skills and practice of community mediation.

- The changes in awareness and attitudes in community members were negligible with respect to the role of the YCMC project in the promotion and improvement of economic opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The midterm evaluation produced the following recommendations:

- SFCG-M should ensure that the community mediation centres have both the necessary resources and necessary expertise to set up an organizational system that will facilitate access to community mediation services in the targeted communities.
- SFCG-M should build the capacity of youth mediation centres to have a more independent approach to tackling local problems and ensuring sustainability.
- More capacity building is required in terms of how youth community mediation centres can become hubs that facilitate access to employment.
- Organizational systems have to be developed to document the intervention of youth community mediation centres in order to have a reflective approach that can ensure institutional learning and formative evaluation.
- A long term action plan to promote a culture of peace, promote community mediation and foster constructive approaches to resolving communal conflicts has to be designed and developed collaboratively with youth and communities.
- More capacity building for youth community mediation centres to secure local partnerships independently from SFCG to ensure sustainability.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The midterm evaluation was in general both formative and summative in nature. It is couched within a reflective approach that attends to both the process of implementation as well as the actual outcomes achieved to date. The evaluation adopts a quasi-experimental design that allows room for the comparison of baseline data and performance at midterm. Mainly performance is measured through the comparison of the state of the key selected indicators. As the midterm evaluation, data was mainly collected in the three prefectures in Casablanca. The comparison to measure performance and outcomes is done using the baseline results of the three prefectures in question. Given the fact that Tetouan is an extension of the project that started after Casablanca, it is assumed that performance and outcomes especially with respect to the perceptions of youth and community members will not be at the same level.

*Source: The majority of this document was taken verbatim from the Evaluation of Search for Common Ground Activities in Morocco in 2009. For the full evaluation o, please refer to:
www.sfcg.org/sfcg/evaluations/evaluations.html*