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## Search for Common Ground Morocco Key Findings from External Evaluation

In March 2010, Search for Common Ground (SFCG) Morocco concludes the implementation of a project entitled MediAction. The project has been implemented in partnership with the *Initiative Nationale pour le Développement Humain* (National Initiative for Human Development, referred to here as INDH) and the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) through the British Embassy in Rabat, which is the main funder. Its overall objective has been “building the capacity of youth for the promotion of a culture of mediation, dialogue and peace in marginalised neighbourhoods, and to reinforce social cohesion”. MediAction has lasted for 27 months, from January 2008 to March 2009, with an additional three-month no-cost extension. It included three main activity components: 1) the training of young mediators in Rabat, Marrakech, Fez, Meknes, and Sale; 2) the creation of five mediation centres in partnership with INDH and local associations in each of the five cities; and 3) awareness-raising campaigns on mediation at the local level.

### EVALUATION SCOPE & METHODOLOGY

The primary purpose of the evaluation is to improve the effectiveness of SFCG-M programming by providing learning tools of relevant findings and recommendations. Lama’s methodology is based on a participatory approach that is designed to involve all stakeholders in a self-assessment process. This participatory approach aims to foster engagement in continuous improvement and learning, both within the organisation and across all partners. In order to maximise the learning potential of the evaluation, data collection has been mainly qualitative, although quantitative data has also been taken into consideration for accountability purposes.

The evaluation aims to assess the five criteria mentioned above, with a particular focus on *impact, sustainability* and *linkages*. The evaluation team has considered the original project logical framework as a starting point, seeking to identify the project’s impact beyond that which is expected. Special attention is given to relationships that are usually hidden, as well as the underestimated results of a peacebuilding project.

### KEY FINDINGS

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The present evaluation found MediAction to have been a largely successful project as:

- The vast majority of young mediators feel that the programme has positively changed their life. Most of the young mediators feel that their self-esteem has grown remarkably as a result of joining the programme.
- The training component provided participants with useful mediation skills and relevant notions of conflict transformation.
- Although the outreach campaign was organised differently from city to city, it has generally been successful in setting up mediation as an alternative method for solving disputes in target communities.
- MediAction has great potential to foster inter-generational dialogue throughout target communities. As shown by reported cases, young mediators can act as agents of change and help their peers relate to adults, despite the fact that adults do not always accept mediation performed by youth.
- Young mediators often act as agents of change, reintegrating people at risk in the community.

- Beneficiaries appreciated mediation as a faster and less expensive means to solve disputes. Moreover, when this approach was compared to the court system, parties in conflict saw that mediation gave them the opportunity to express themselves freely in a safe and confidential space, unlike the court system.

## Challenges

- Mediation centres are often hosted in places considered inadequate by young mediators;
- The heavy administrative procedures of INDH funds have delayed the projects in all five locations;
- The role of young mediators is not clearly defined by law;
- Young mediators need more supervision to effectively intervene in disputes; and a general lack of communication with local institutional partners has often delayed the project. In terms of project planning, although the project has a logical framework with some information regarding activities and indicators, it doesn't clearly state the expected results.

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## OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is important for SFCG and its partners to enable continuity of the project. It would be a mistake to end the project and leave the youth in a limbo at the beginning of their proactive role as agents of change in their communities.
- The evaluation team recommends enhancing the project's ownership of implementing partners. In MediAction the local associations mainly had a logistic role. If the implementing partner had more ownership, sustainability and quality of the performance would increase dramatically. The evaluation team also strongly recommends including SFCG's coaching sessions in further programming.
- The evaluation team recommends involving all partners during the planning phase with start-up seminars and planning meetings, which should be used to develop a shared vision.
- The evaluation team suggests discussing an exit strategy with partners at the beginning of the project in order to create ownership and sustainability from the outset.
- SFCG should find creative solutions to better define mediators' social status. The evaluation team suggests creating an 'umbrella' of organisations that recognise mediation as a practice for solving disputes. Mediators could also create a symbol or wear t-shirts that make them recognisable in the community.

*Source: The majority of this document was taken verbatim from the Evaluation of Search for Common Ground Activities in Morocco, March 2010. For the full evaluation, please refer to:  
[www.sfcg.org/sfcg/evaluations/evaluations.html](http://www.sfcg.org/sfcg/evaluations/evaluations.html)*