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

This report represents the results of an evaluation of Search for Common Ground's 22-month, USAID-funded Youth and Community Mediation Center project in Casablanca and Tetouan, Morocco. The YCMC project itself was designed "To mitigate communal conflict by engaging youth constructively in Morocco's democratic and economic development," through the establishment of three YCMCs in Casablanca and one in Tetouan. At these centers, the project would facilitate the training of 105 marginalized youths (75 in the Casablanca centers and 30 in the Tetouan center) in social mediation, and employability and entrepreneurship, with two specific objectives:

- *Prevent and resolve communal conflicts:* Trained youth leaders will mediate, resolve day-to-day conflicts, facilitate community dialogue, and foster stability and cooperation within the targeted communities, as well as in schools and in community-government relations, thereby contributing to the creation of a culture of participation, dialogue, and tolerance.
- *Promote youth employment in the targeted communities:* Trained youth leaders will offer coaching, training, and orientation to marginalized youth to enhance their employability, liaise with relevant government to access job and training opportunities, and encourage youth entrepreneurship.

EVALUATION SCOPE

This team conducted its evaluation in the final weeks of the project and in accordance with the TOR (attached as Annex A), which called on the evaluators to: "Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the project and come up with findings, lessons and recommendations to guide and inform future program work with special focus on Community Mediation and Youth Development in Morocco." The TOR also proposed several particular areas on which the team should focus its evaluation of the project's performance, namely:

- Relevance of project design to the problems of target groups,
- Project's efficiency in translating inputs (time, resources, etc.) into outputs,
- Effectiveness of project outputs,
- Project's impact on target groups,
- Sustainability of project outputs once the project ends, and
- Extent to which the implementation process has been participatory and empowering of the target groups.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Relevance:** The project's concept and design appear to have been largely relevant to the needs of the participants and communities in which it was implemented, even if many of the youths claim to have held few expectations when they entered the project.
- **Efficiency:** Project efficiency was strong on several accounts, with participants giving high marks to trainers and trainings. Despite obstacles, project activities were conducted in a timely and participatory fashion. The organization and management of the YCM centers could have been improved, as could record keeping practices for the project.
- **Effectiveness:** The final results of the project's PMP show that, in general, the youth, community members, and community leaders believe that the project has met its main objectives. Overall, 70 percent of those

surveyed in both cities directly link a reduction of social tensions to the work of mediation centers, while 65 percent directly link an increase in economic opportunities for youth to the work of mediation centers. Sixty-seven percent of youth reported that they can identify sustainable employment opportunities, but just seven percent of project participants stated that sustainable employment opportunities are available in their communities, a potential product of the poor economic conditions existing in these areas and in this time period. Due to flaws in the design of the PMP, reliance on low sample sizes was necessary for all surveys, raising questions about the accuracy of the results for several indicators. In some instances, unexplained differences in the baseline figures for both cities render final results difficult to interpret.

- **Impact:** In the area of social mediation, the project has had a strong impact on project participants, while its impact has been less strong in the area of employability and entrepreneurship. At the community level, the project has had a noticeably weaker impact. Project participants have been more engaged in promoting social mediation than employability and entrepreneurship in their communities. In such large districts, more time may be needed to observe the full scope of the project's impact on the targeted communities.
- **Sustainability:** The question of sustainability remains the project's Achilles' heel. While the partnership agreements signed by SFCG-M's and its partner associations hold the latter responsible for the continued operation of the YCM centers, the commitment of three of the four partner associations is questionable. In addition, two of the four neighborhoods remain without permanent centers at this point in time. All of the centers lack equipment and resources, such as training materials, to facilitate the training of other youths. In Casablanca, this deficiency is in large part due to a delay in funding provided by the INDH. In all four cases, it remains unclear how the centers will continue to function, and with what funding, once SFCG-M's grant ends. The project participants have shown a strong interest in continuing to promote social mediation, but the burden will rest largely on their shoulders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Hold Elections to Involve Youth More Directly in YCM Center Management:** Allowing youths to elect their peers to leadership positions within each center could have helped provide the centers with an organizational structure and mechanisms for distributing responsibility among the project participants, with positive effects on participants' self esteem and sense of ownership of the centers and their work.
- **Balance the Size and Scope of Outreach Campaigns:** In some instances, a more focused concentration of outreach activities on specific groups that express a sincere demand for the skills provided by project participants can help institutionalize social mediation practices.
- **Improve Contingency Planning:** The evident challenge of working with the INDH, including funding delays, unfulfilled promises, and untimely demands that SFCG-M partner with particular organizations, took their toll on the YCMC project. Developing a strong contingency plan and risk management scheme is necessary, particularly if bureaucratic public institutions like INDH are to play a central role in the success of a project.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation team implemented a four-stage evaluation process which culminated in the production of the present report:

- *Preparation* (July 1 - July 22, 2009)
Preliminary site visits, refining of methodology and tools
- *Data Collection* (July 23 - August 10, 2009)
Surveys, focus groups, interviews, document review, observation
- *Analysis and Report Writing* (August 11 - August 24, 2009)

Data analysis, development of draft report

- *Finalization* (August 25 - September 4, 2009)

Refining of analysis and supporting documentation, production of final report

The data collection phase blended both quantitative and qualitative information gathering mechanisms. The Quantitative methods included questionnaires and document review. The qualitative methods included interviews and focus groups, document review and observation.

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