



Search for Common Ground in Morocco

Program Overview

Morocco is moving fast towards an open and pluralistic political system, with the implementation of a greater range of democratic norms. However, the Kingdom is experiencing the typical symptoms of cultural and political tensions that accompany all democratization processes. Despite the tensions present in the current system, there remains a strong will on the part of Moroccan civil society and the government to adopt alternative methods of dealing with instability and conflict.

Since 2001, Search for Common Ground has been working with Moroccan society to transform the manner in which people and institutions resolve conflicts, and to develop a culture of mediation in Morocco as a way to reduce the social costs and risks which are caused by internal conflict, without alienating Moroccan culture. To achieve this, Search for Common Ground in Morocco:

- 1) Enhances the capacity of individuals and institutions to resolve conflicts cooperatively;*
- 2) Develops a culture of dialogue and mediation by bringing together key actors which includes civil society, the government and the media.*

I. History of Search for Common Ground / Morocco

The main activities of Search for Common Ground have revolved around the following themes:

1. Alternative Dispute Resolution - ADR (2004-2008)

Morocco is undergoing a fast-paced reform process leading towards a system more inclusive of good governance and rule of law. Particular attention is being paid to the judicial branch of the government as one empowered and independent arm for Justice. The reforms include the need for faster and more efficient legal proceedings, and a more resilient court system able to handle more effectively an increasing number of civil cases.

Morocco has also seen a series of reforms such as the civil code of conduct of the law of arbitration and conventional mediation (loi n°05-08), which allows for new mediation devices to litigants.

Within this context, Search for Common Ground initiated a three-phase project of Alternative Dispute Resolution - the ADR Program.

- ***The first phase*** (2004-2005) aimed at securing the buy-in from the Ministry of Justice regarding the introduction of ADR within the judicial system, as well as capacity building and sharpening of the knowledge of Moroccan Judges in mediation. This was achieved through the organization of several training workshops (in Morocco and abroad) and outreach events.
- ***The second phase*** (2006) focused on Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and lawyers, and provided these groups with adequate training in mediation techniques and mechanisms. Another strategic objective was the promotion of a constructive dialogue between all stake holders, namely the judges, lawyers and CSOs.
- ***The third phase*** (2007-2008) strengthened the capacity of mediators and trainers of mediators. In addition, this phase focused on raising the general public's awareness of mediation and its availability through campaigns and media.

2. Supporting the 'Cities without Slums' program in the USAID/Morocco Local Governance Project (2006 – 2008)

In the context of the national program of ‘Cities without Slums’ (*Villes sans Bidonvilles*) launched by the Ministry of Housing, Search for Common Ground Morocco developed a three-phase project aimed at implementing social mediation work (*‘accompagnement social’*) in the Bachkou shantytown of Casablanca and creating a social mediation cell (*‘Cellule d’Accompagnement Sociale’*).

- ***The first phase*** (2006-2007) aimed at conducting an exhaustive participatory survey at the level of the slum community, with the goal of providing pertinent information to key decision-makers to help them decide on the most appropriate housing options to undertake in Bachkou.

The final results of the exhaustive participatory survey (July 2007) enhanced the decision-making process for the Bachkou shantytown. Indeed, the social survey showed that 70% of Bachkou households were in favor of the re-housing program, which contradicted the established hypothesis and presumptions, circulating before the survey.

- ***The second phase*** (2007-2008) focused on two complementary axes, with a particular focus on 270 households who are the first beneficiaries of the rehousing program.

- 1) *Contact and dialogue with households and institutional partners about the re-housing program;*
- 2) *Information and awareness raising with the households about the possibilities of financing via various bank loans and micro-credit (Fogarim).*

- ***The third phase*** (2008) continued to provide a dialogue between the inhabitants of Bachkou shantytown and key decision makers. Search for Common Ground worked on providing an adherent methodology to the framework of the demolition of Bachkou.

- 1) *Mitigation of conflict between households, key decision makers and master builders of the new housing units;*

- 2) *Information to the households about the re-housing options available to them and participation in the lottery designating their new housing;*
- 3) *Offer moral and psychological help to households through field visits, information campaigns and public meetings;*
- 4) *Creation of an exhaustive census of Bachkou households to ensure the fair designation for the re-housing program.*

3. Strengthening the Capacity of Women Listening Centers and Promoting Family Mediation in Morocco (2007-2008)

This project equipped the staff of Moroccan women listening centers with new skills to enable them to act as a third party in the resolution of family conflicts, as well as involving the wider CSOs, lawyers and governmental representatives in helping change the way family conflicts are resolved or prevented.

SFCG partnered with The Moroccan Association for Combating Violence against Women (AMVEF), one of the leading women listening centers, based in Casablanca. A family mediation guide was published and is 'on-line' to circulate among associations and the wider public to create awareness.

4. Promoting Commercial Mediation in Morocco (2007-2008)

In collaboration with the CIMAR (International Center of Arbitration and Mediation in Rabat) and USAID, Search for Common Ground organized basic and advanced training in commercial mediation, and provided participants with professional tools to solve their commercial disputes in a rapid and effective way.

II. Current and New Programs at Search for Common Ground / Morocco

1. Development of Youth Community Mediation in Disadvantaged Areas

Search for Common Ground is partnering with various youth NGO's, governmental institutions and foreign embassies to implement programs aimed at developing youth community mediation centers. These centers have the main objectives of

- 1) ***Preventing and resolving community conflicts*** - trained youth leaders mediate, resolve day-to-day conflicts, facilitate community dialogue and help foster stability and cooperation within the targeted communities. This includes work in schools and with local government - community relations, thereby creating of a culture of participation, dialogue and tolerance.
- 2) ***Promoting youth entrepreneurial spirit in targeted communities*** - trained youth leaders offer coaching, training and orientation to marginalized youth within their communities. This aims to enhance their employability, and helps them to be knowledgeable about and access employment and training opportunities, as well as encourage youth entrepreneurship.

To achieve these two objectives, Search for Common Ground in Morocco is implementing a number of projects:

- **The 'MediAction' Program (2008 – 2009)** - In collaboration with the National Human Development Initiative (INDH) and the British Embassy in Rabat, Search for Common Ground is supporting the creation of 5 mediation centers in disadvantaged communities in five cities of Morocco, through training of 125 youth leaders in the area of conflict resolution and prevention.
- **A Pilot Initiative of 4 Youth Community Mediation Centers in Casablanca and Tetouan (2008-2009)** - In collaboration with the local government of Casablanca and Tetouan, the INDH and USAID, Search for Common Ground is supporting the creation of 4 youth community mediation centers in 3 disadvantaged areas of Casablanca and 1 disadvantaged area of Tetouan, to engage youth constructively in local democratic development process and promoting a spirit mediation and also of entrepreneurship. This will be achieved through training and coaching of young leaders in conflict prevention, non-violent communication skills, negotiation, facilitation and mediation skills, as well as an awareness campaign about the issues arising in

their communities. The young leaders will also be trained in self-esteem, leadership, project creation and management, strategic planning and commercial communication, fundraising, micro-credit and income generating activities, creation of a micro-enterprise, new technologies of information and communication.

- **“The Team”, a dramatic television series (2008 – 2009)** - ‘The Team’, a 26 episode dramatic TV series, flows from SFCG’s numerous projects of youth engagement in constructive dialogue and conflict resolution in a non-violent manner. ‘The Team’ will be a fictionalized story of a Moroccan football team and its players, which will be broadcasted at prime time on a Moroccan television channel. By engaging millions of viewers with the themes of moderation, mutual understanding, non-violent communication and tolerance, it will achieve the purpose of engaging with thousands of communities through a popular and loved sport. Outreach tools that will be developed by SFCG include ‘The Team’ community, university and prison debates, a documentary film covering the national debate process among the target communities, and a web site and blog, which will encourage interactiveness and dialogue, along with viewer surveys. Funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office/ British Embassy in Rabat and a Moroccan television station (SRNT), the series is planned to air in 2009. SFCG will also seek ways to expand broadcasting throughout the Maghreb region, particularly in Algeria and Tunisia.
- **Countering Radicalism (2008 – 2011)** - In partnership with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office/ British Embassy in Rabat and the National Prison Administration Morocco, SFCG is engaging in a de radicalization program by engaging with at-risk youth and prisoners in Maghreb prisons through constructive dialogue and capacity-building. By fostering these methods of conflict management skills, SFCG aims to reduce violence inside prisons, foster moderation and engage prisoners in positive civic participation. Targeting prisons is an important concern as it provides an ideal breeding ground for criminals to develop militant extremist ideology. SFCG will also offer a separate training scheme to prison staff to help them build sustainable relationships with prisoners at risk of radicalization. This will be achieved

through two Conflict Management Training Programs integrated into the training curricula offered by the prison administration and will include training materials and manuals. Four study tours will also be conducted across the UK, Morocco and Algeria to strengthen cross-fertilization and secure the support of key decision-makers. In conjunction to this, 20 trainers will be trained from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, as well as monthly discussions implemented to pursue continual dialogue and systematic monitoring of the changes achieved through the program.

- **Countering Stereotypes through Photojournalism (2009)** - In partnership with the American Embassy in Rabat, Search for Common Ground will implement three four-day courses on countering stereotypes through photojournalism with local conflict resolution experts and an experienced photojournalist. The courses will be given at the *Institut Supérieur d'Information et Communication* (Superior Institute of Communication and Information) in Rabat for students and photojournalists in order to improve the skills of students and photojournalists to combat stereotypes. A gallery of photos will be on display and a photographic competition with prizes to the 3 best photos combating stereotypes will be awarded.