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Search for Common Ground

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SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND IN MOROCCO

Program overview

Morocco is moving fast towards an open and pluralistic political system and is experiencing the typical symptoms of tension that accompany similar processes of democratisation. Despite the adversarial attitudes, there remains a strong will on the part of Moroccan society and government to adopt alternative ways to deal with differences.

Since 2001, Search for Common Ground in Morocco has worked with Moroccan society to transform the manner in which people and institutions resolve conflicts and to develop a culture of mediation in Morocco. In order to reduce the risks and costs of disputes, Search for Common Ground in Morocco:

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

Our activities have revolved around the following themes:

1. Alternative Dispute Resolution – ADR (institutionnalising mediation in Morocco)

Morocco is undergoing a fast-paced reform process leading toward a stronger system of good governance and rule of law. A particular attention is being paid to the judicial branch of government as one independent and empowered arm for Justice. The reforms include the need for faster and more efficient legal proceedings and a resilient court system able to effectively handle the increasing number of civil cases. On these issues, we are working **with the Ministry of Justice** to conduct the groundwork for the institutionnalization of mediation in Morocco.

Within this context, Search for Common Ground has initiated a three-phase project called the ADR Programme:

- ***The first phase*** (2004-2005) has aimed at securing the buy-in from the Ministry of Justice regarding the introduction of ADR within the judicial system, as well as building the capacity and sharpen the knowledge of Moroccan judges in Mediation through the organisation of several training workshops (in Morocco and abroad) and outreach events.

- ***The second phase*** (2006) was oriented towards Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and Lawyers and was meant to provide these groups with adequate training in Mediation techniques and mechanisms. Another strategic objective was be the promotion of a constructive dialogue between all stakeholders, namely the judges, Lawyers, and CSOs.

- ***The third phase (***2007 – 2008) attends to strengthening the capacity of mediators and trainers of mediators and enhancing mediators' knowledge of important practices in mediation in addition to raising the public's awareness about mediation and its usage.

2. Supporting the "*Cities without Slums*" program in Morocco – Local governance project (2006 – 2008)

- *The first phase (2006-2007)*

In the context of the national program of "Cities without Slums" launched by the Ministry of Housing, Search for Common Ground has developed a two-phase project on implementing social mediation work ("Accompagnement social") in Bachkou shantytown in Casablanca. The first phase implemented by Search for Common Ground in Bachkou aimed at conducting an exhaustive participatory social survey at the level of the slum community in Bachkou, with the aim to provide relevant information to decision makers to help them decide about the most appropriate housing interventions to undertake in Bachkou.

The final results of the exhaustive participatory social survey (July 2007) have boosted the decision making process regarding the future of Bachkou shantytown : Indeed, the social survey has shown that 70% of Bachkou households are actually in favor of the re-housing program, which has contradicted the pre-established hypothesis and suppositions that were circulating before the launch of the survey.

- *The second phase (2007-2008)*

The second phase of the social mediation project in Bachkou is focused on 2 axes of complementary interventions, with a particular focus on 270 households that compose the first group of the rehousing program:

I - Liaising with the households and the institutional partners about the re-housing program;
2- Informing and sensitizing about the possibilities of financing via bank loans (Fogarim).

Our overall goal is to contribute to embetter community-based participatory governance by bringing together civil society and local and national governments in a collaborative decision-making effort. We are looking forward to furthering the collaborative community experience and making it a replicable model for other Moroccan slums.

3. Development of youth community mediation in disadvantaged areas

SFCG partner with youth NGOs based in disadvantaged areas to conduct programs aimed at developing youth community mediation centers. These centers will have mainly two objectives:

- ***Prevent and resolve community 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-(local)government relations, thereby contributing to the creation of a culture of participation, dialogue, and tolerance. ; and
- ***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.

4. Strengthening the capacity of the women listening centers and promoting family mediation in Morocco (2007-2008)

This project aims to equip 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 to involve the wider society of civil society organisations, lawyers, and government representatives to help achieve an incremental change in the way family conflicts are resolved or prevented.

SFCG is partnering with one leading women listening centre based in Casablanca ("The Moroccan Association for Combating Violence against Women") to successfully implement this project.

5. Promoting commercial mediation in Morocco (2007-2008)

In collaboration with the CIMAR (International Center of Arbitration and Mediation of Rabat) and USAID, Search for Common Ground organize basic and advanced commercial mediation training workshops with the the aim to provide the participants with professional tools that allow them to solve their commercial disputes in an effective and short way.

Search for Common Ground in Morocco is a programme of Search for Common Ground, an international NGO working in the field of conflict transformation. For additional information, see our website, www.sfcg.org, or contact the Morocco Office, 30 Rue Aguelmane Sidi Ali, No. 8, Rabat, Agdal; phone (+212-37) 77.44.70 ; fax (+212-37) 77.44.74; e-mail : rabat@sfcg.org .

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