MENA Common Ground Institute Fellowship Call for Research Proposals Tunisia and Egypt

Background
Four years after the Arab uprisings led to radical political change across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), many societies continue to grapple with insecurity, fluid transitions and aggravated identity politics. Dialogue plays a crucial role in countries undergoing a transition towards democracy and it is much needed now more than ever before.

Building on its 23 years of experience working in the MENA region and 33 years worldwide with a physical presence in 35 countries including 6 countries in MENA, Search for Common Ground (SFCG) engages at this critical time by initiating the MENA Common Ground Institute (CGI).

The MENA CGI is a regional initiative to enhance dialogue quality in the MENA region, with the overall goal to foster collaborative dialogue on local, regional and national levels in the region. In order to achieve this goal, MENA CGI aim to 1) build the capacity of a new generation of Arabic-speaking dialogue design and dialogue facilitation experts, 2) support dialogue initiatives and raise their acceptance by communities, unions, civil society, media, and local governments, and 3) research, celebrate, and reward best dialogue practices. Conflict resolution is a young and growing academic field in the MENA region, but has not yet taken root as an established field in regional academia.

MENA CGI has commenced its operations in January 2015 with a one-year pilot project “Promoting Dialogues” targeting civil society organizations in Tunisia and Egypt. In the framework of this pilot initiative, MENA CGI will first enhance the skills of local civil society organizations in convening and designing effective community dialogue processes. In the first round of the accredited online dialogue facilitation training (March – April, 2015) offered by Soliya, MENA CGI has already engaged with a total of 20 civil society organizations in Tunisia and Egypt.

In addition, MENA CGI will support local organizations in Egypt and Tunisia with small grants to implement community dialogue initiatives in their communities. MENA CGI will also empower academic fellows to expand the field of conflict resolution and dialogue in the MENA region. Finally, MENA CGI in partnership with Soliya will produce and disseminate a Dialogue Facilitation Training Manual in Arabic in order to secure a wider reach and replicability throughout the region.

About the Call
MENA CGI is launching a Call for Research Proposals from researchers affiliated with research institutions to carry out mapping studies and research on dialogue and conflict resolution processes in either Egypt or Tunisia, with the overall objective of expanding and advancing research in the fields of dialogue and conflict resolution in academia in the MENA region.

Applicants may propose research topics on any aspect of dialogue and conflict resolution at the local or national level in either Egypt or Tunisia (to be further refined in collaboration with MENA CGI once the fellows have been selected). One aspect of the research should be the identification and evaluation of good practices from completed (or well advanced) dialogue and conflict resolution projects on the local
or national levels in the target country (Egypt or Tunisia). These projects may relate to diverse topics of local importance, including but not limited to peacebuilding and conflict resolution, countering violent extremism, civic participation, democratic transition, gender advocacy, sustainable development, and social entrepreneurship.

MENA CGI will prioritize research proposals that reflect the diversity of community dialogue approaches including processes led or initiated by civil society and local or national authorities. As appropriate, awarded researchers may refer to, research or access the community dialogue initiatives supported in the framework of the MENA CGI Small Grants program in Tunisia and Egypt. The research proposal may be either an extension of on-going research or a new proposal for a research study.

Evaluation criteria for research proposals will include: relevancy to the thematic focus of this call and to the national context; clarity; researcher’s access to stakeholders; potential for leveraging this research into new research, learning, or programmatic opportunities; and the applicant’s previous research experience.

Each MENA CGI Fellow will receive a lump sum of $1,850 USD to cover all expenses associated with this MENA CGI Fellowship, which shall include both desk research and field visits arranged by the Fellow with the assistance of the MENA CGI Team. Each Fellowship must include a minimum of one week of field visits.

**Deliverables**

- One analytical research article (7,000-9,000 words), to be published with the assistance of MENA CGI. A first draft will be required for review by MENA CGI prior to the final deadline of August 31, 2015.
- An opinion article (op-ed) and a blog post (e.g. simplified digests of the research intended for a general audience, personal anecdotes and insights from the research process, etc.), which will be promoted and publicized by MENA CGI on the SFCG [website](#), [Common Ground Blog](#), and other online platforms.

The above deliverables may be produced in one or more of the following languages: Arabic, English and French.

**Duration**

The Fellowship period will last from mid-June to the end of August 2015. The above deliverables are due by the end of August 2015.

**Eligibility**

- Researchers must be legal residents of either Egypt or Tunisia. Nationals from other MENA countries who are currently residing in Egypt or Tunisia are also eligible.
- Researchers must hold a post-graduate degree in social sciences, human rights, conflict studies, political sciences or any relevant field.
- Researchers must be affiliated with an academic institution of higher education, research institute, academic center, or think-tank in Egypt or Tunisia.
- Researchers must be fluent in one of the following languages: English, French or Arabic.
- Researchers must have published at least one relevant research work in one of the above-mentioned 3 languages.
- Applicants must be available during the research period (mid-June to the end of August 2015).

**How to Apply**

Applicant researchers should complete the research proposal template and send it with an up-to-date resume and a sample of previously published research work (as a link, Word document, or PDF) by email to menacgi@sfcg.org with “MENA CGI Fellowship Application” in the subject line.
Research proposals should be complete and respect the designated template. In case of incomplete proposals, false information, or using other templates, applications will be ineligible and excluded by the MENA CGI evaluation committee.

The deadline for receiving research proposals is **5 June 2015 at 18:00 Tunis time (UTC+1)**.

For more information and/or queries, please email menacgi@sfcg.org.