

“Towards national reconciliation in Libya”

Youth Consultation Workshop

16-18 May, Tunis

Introduction

As part of the first outcome of the project “Towards National Reconciliation in Libya”, funded by the Peacebuilding Fund, which aims at developing a comprehensive strategy for national reconciliation based on inclusive consultation and allowing for the meaningful and effective participation of youth, women, and groups from across the Libyan society, a workshop was organized with young activists from 16 to 18 May, in Tunis.

The consultative meeting gathered 30 youth from cities affected by conflict and who are actively engaged in promoting reconciliation in their respective communities. It was organized and facilitated in partnership with three national youth organizations (*H20* from Tripoli, the *Debate and Dialogue Club* (DDC) from Misrata, and the *Sama Youth Foundation* from Benghazi). During three days, through various group exercises and animated discussions, the participants identified the main conflicts in Libya today and how they affect youth in particular. They discussed the root causes of present divisions and best ways to address them. Participants focused on key conflict factors, including militias, IDPs, tribes and identity, and defined joint and innovative projects that could positively contribute to dealing with those through a reconciliation framework.

The various projects described below will be elaborated and two of them shall be submitted as proposals for grants through the PBF project. The youth have also formed a network to exchange information and follow-up on their various activities.

The consultation was widely reported on social media, through the hash tag *#youth4reconciliation*, including on the Facebook and Twitter pages of H20, DDC, and the Fezzan Libya Group.

Presentation of initiatives

Each group presented their initiative as a solution to the problems that have been previously analyzed as being one cause of the conflicts in Libya today. Five main categories were identified to that end.

Group I: The fighters

Project title: “Transforming a militia into a disciplined army”

The problem of fighters is one of the main drivers of conflict since 2011, and the number of youth engaged in militias has dramatically increased with the deteriorating economic situation, as well as the rise in displacement and immigration.

To address this problem, this youth initiative will transform militia fighters into regular army soldiers, building upon their sense of patriotism and their passion and turning it into a more successful investment, such as fighting terrorism, illegal immigration, drugs and smuggling. Other projects and experiences have indeed demonstrated that it is difficult to educate the combatants by ordinary means, or to simply try to convince them. The proposed method of this project is therefore to use “peer education” as a way to turn these youth away from militias and extremist groups and towards regular state institution. The project will also include awareness raising and education around the importance of having a unified military system.

Target group

- Businessmen and traders who support militias
- Extremist political parties who oppose the building of a regular national army
- The general public affected by the militias but who sometimes benefit from their protection/services
- Gangs that profit from illegal migration and smuggling
- Militia leaders

Group discussion/Issues and challenges

- How to change the allegiance of a militia fighter towards a regular army when they benefit so well from their membership and participation in the activity of their armed group? What incentives can be found to make them change their minds?
- There is no unified military institution to be joined by the demobilized fighters: shall we wait for it to be established to start working with these youth?
- The demobilized militia fighters have to be educated about the respect for the rule of law, the importance of justice and accountability before joining the regular army, in order to prevent future violations and continued impunity.
- The project should include psychological support for demobilized fighters.
- The project should be adapted to the various types of fighters. In particular, those who have had a civilian life in the past (education or work) will be easier to demobilize than those who have only known life in militias since 2011.

Group II: The national authorities

Project Title: “One Nation”

The project works in parallel on two main axes, long and short term, to address a deep and central issue in the Libyan crisis:

1. National dialogue, including all segments of the population (tribes, political parties, security institutions, politicians, activists, media actors, fighters, youth, wise men, imams) towards reconciliation, supported by youth across the country.

2. Negotiation between all the main actors on the ground, to involve them in the dialogue and reconciliation process and address the main bottlenecks that prevent the resolution of the conflict in Libya. Youth will act as mediator between conflicting parties, including armed groups.

Target group

The project will be inclusive, all parties will be involved including key players and decision makers at the national level.

Group discussions/issues and challenges

- There is already a large number of past and current dialogue initiatives, and none of them have given any real results so far. People need results more than talks.
- There is a danger in associating the mufti's office in this proposed dialogue. It has a supra-constitutional authority and immunity that is problematic.

Group III: Tribes

Project title: “Alleviating tribal conflict”

The objective of this initiative is to contribute building trust and rebuild relations between the conflicting tribes of Libya, through awareness raising efforts to bring their views closer. The young leaders and members of these tribes should have a key role in alleviating these conflicts.

Target group

1. Youth and young people involved in the tribal society;
2. Effective and influential figures, including elders, involved in tribal mediation and conflict resolution.

Activities

- Awareness raising on the role of tribes in promoting peace in Libya and traditional practices of conflict resolution.
- Training of young tribal leaders on customary conflict resolution and reconciliation.
- Organizing dialogue sessions among youth from tribes in conflict.

Results

- Contributing to building sustainable peace between tribes through youth support.
- Raising awareness of the social and positive role of tribes in reconciliation.
- Reinforcing dialogue between youth and elders.

Target groups:

- Civil society organizations

- Media outlets
- United Nations
- Tribal leaders, including sheikhs and elders
- Youth members from the tribes
- Spoilers: those who benefit from conflict or support their tribes with extreme means.

Group discussions/issues and challenges

- The project should include sports and other teambuilding joint activities between tribes.
- In the tribal system, youth are usually not excluded from reconciliation efforts and there is little communication between them and the elders, who may oppose the project.

Group IV: Cultural diversity and identity

Project title: “Musical Tour to Promote Libyan Culture”

The main objective of this initiative is to raise awareness about the Libyan identity and the notion of citizenship through panel discussions and collective dialogue, involving all sectors of society and widely broadcasted on national media. The project will:

- Create an open dialogue between Libyans with different identities.
- Define the notion of Libyan identity as complex, multidimensional and comprehensive.
- Associate Libyan identity with the rights of indigenous people.
- Address the challenges faced by indigenous people and minorities.
- Promote networking between different cultural components across Libya.

Considering music as a common language through which all differences can be overcome, the project will organize a musical tour from different musical cultures throughout the country, especially around the main Libyan cities of Tripoli, Benghazi, Sebha, Beida, Tobruk and Misrata, for a total duration of three months. Making these various audience listening to the diverse musical heritage of Libya will make them feel the strength of their cultural diversity, and understand the need to overcome their differences. Concerts will be followed by open discussions about Libyan identity, cultural components, and indigenous people, followed by an advocacy campaign to rebuild the national sentiment. The tour will be widely publicized.

Target group

- Activists representing the various cultural components
- Indigenous communities
- Arab communities, including those that oppose the recognition of the specific rights of cultural components
- Local authorities, municipalities and public figures
- Members of the Constitutional Drafting Committee
- Media outlets
- Political actors who benefit from the cultural divisions

Group discussion/issues and challenges

- There is no national/central state in which all cultural components could be integrated and protected.
- The demands of the Tebu, Tuareg, and Amazigh vary greatly and need to be clarified. The Amazigh demand particular cultural rights, including the recognition of their language, while Tebu and Tuareg have been exploited under Gadhafi and attacked during and after the revolution. They demand accountability and rights for these violations, and to be recognized as Libyans. There is also a more general problem of marginalization in the South, which is not related to the recognition of cultural rights.
- The convention of the United Nations for Indigenous Peoples should be included in this initiative, and actively promoted through it.
- The debate about constitutionalizing the language of indigenous people is complex and should be left out of the project.

Group 5: Displaced people and Refugees

Project Title: “Rehabilitation and Awareness Center”

The initiative will be developed based on a detailed study of the causes of the conflicts in Libya and their consequences, as well as on reliable data and statistics about the displaced and refugee communities. Surveys will be conducted with these groups to measure their ability and desire to reconcile. The project will include several phases:

- An advocacy campaign on a large scale to promote local reconciliation initiatives and encourage all actors to support peace efforts led by tribes and municipalities, with the help of national public figures.
- Confidence-building measures to be implemented between the conflicting parties, in order to rebuild social communication channels.
- Leaders and members of armed groups to be educated about human rights and how to prevent their violations, in order to fight against impunity.

Target group

- Leaders and members of armed militias supporting dialogue and reconciliation
- Tribal elders
- Government of National Accord / relevant ministries
- Local and municipal councils
- Families of the victims
- Civil society organizations
- International organizations
- Media
- Leaders and members of armed forces

Group discussions/issues and challenges

- Awareness raising initiatives are key because there is a new generation that has only known life in the IDP camps: it can either be a future generation of peaceful commitment or of revenge.

- The project should focus on addressing the needs of the displaced in the city of Benghazi, which has deeply affected its social fabric.
- There is a need for true commitment from the authorities, including the Presidential Council, which in the case of the Tawergha did not fulfill any of its promises.
- The victims of all sides should be involved in the reconciliation processes; there is a moral dimension to their participation.
- In the absence of real action with young displaced, they risk joining armed groups, as is happening now with young Tawerghans who could be seeking revenge.
- The project should include psychological support for the displaced people in order to facilitate their reintegration.

Main recommendations and next steps

1. Responsibilities

H2O team will coordinate between the participants until the next meeting of the group. Among the various initiatives presented, Project IV on multicultural identity and Project III on tribes were selected unanimously as the most developed and concrete. Both will prepare joint project proposals including the remarks of the participants, and share it with the group.

2. Networking

A closed network of individuals and organizations participating to this consultation will be established. Additional members can join only upon request. The Global Shapers network models, will be shared with all participants as a model and adapted to suit the particular needs of the group. It will be then adopted as the groups' bylaws for their network, during the next youth meeting.

3. Communication

A Facebook group for all participants has been created. It shall be used for sharing information, discussing and communicating on various issues related to reconciliation and dialogue, as well as to serve as a networking tool to follow-up on the workshop's recommendations.

The next meeting should be in less than three months and focus on developing a youth strategic plan for dialogue and reconciliation in Libya, as well as to finalize the two adopted projects.

4. Security Council resolution 2250

The 2250 resolution will be a central referent and model in the work of the youth group and all projects developed in this framework will directly contribute to its successful implementation.

Full text of Security Council resolution 2250:

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12149.doc.htm>