



Evaluation Report  
April 2021

**End-term Evaluation  
of Cordaid and Human Security Collective's  
Women and Youth as Bridge Builders Programme:  
Strengthening resilience in Libya 3rd NAP 1325**

*Women, Peace and Security Grant Instrument 2016-2019 and 2020*

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## 1. Executive summary

This report details the findings from the end-term evaluation of the Women and Youth as bridge builders programme, which was implemented in Libya from 2016 to 2020 by a consortium led by Cordaid, in partnership with Human Security Collective (HSC) and eight civil society organisations based in Libya.

The overall goal of the programme was to establish an effective partnership between Dutch and Libyan NGOs to contribute to an enabling environment for women's participation and empowerment in Libya, allowing civil society organizations (CSOs), activists, men and women to play their role as bridge builders to increase human security and to contribute to a culture of peace. The programme aimed to increase the collective voice of local activists, CSOs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working at community and national level on the topic of women, peace and security. The programme was supported under the Women, Peace and Security instrument 2016-2019 and 2020 of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This program thus aimed to contribute to the general objective of the 3rd Netherlands' NAP 1325.

The evaluation focused on two main groups of questions. The first group focused on the capacities of activists, seeking to understand how they acted as bridge builders, the programme interventions that helped them the most, the changes in their capacity over time and the effects of the networking element of the programme. The second group of questions focused on the results of the initiatives implemented by activists and of the lobby and advocacy component of the programme, as well as the sustainability of the project and its adaptability.

A variety of methods were used to answer these evaluation questions, including: a desk review of key documents, the collection of stories and a survey of participating activists using the Sprockler tool, a social network analysis comparing the characteristics of the network amongst the activists before and after the programme, and interviews with activists and external stakeholders involved in the activists' initiatives, which fed into the production of six case studies detailing the effects of the initiatives. The six case studies are distributed throughout this report.

The evaluation found that the programme had a profound impact on the activists' view on themselves as bridge builders and that the programme helped to change their attitudes and beliefs with regards to gender and their own rights in a positive way. This was particularly the case for male participants who changed their views on women. Activists also felt more knowledgeable on the topics of Human Security and Gender Sensitive Active Non-Violence, through their participation in capacity building workshops and networking, and showed determination to continue to strive for a more just and peaceful society.

Multiple efforts were undertaken by the programme to build the network, including coalition building workshops, mediation between partners, joint capacity building sessions and joint activities were implemented by the programme and these efforts led to a strengthened CSO network and a feeling among activists of being in a "family" of activists. The diversity of the network, that saw CSOs from different regions with opposing views on gender and political solution for Libya, brought many challenges but was also widely perceived by Libyan partner respondents as its strength. The evaluators conclude that this programme therefore contributed in a meaningful way to a strengthened civil society in Libya despite a challenging context.

Through the development and implementation of small-scale initiatives on gender and human security, activists were able to apply newly acquired skills and led to a range of results contributing towards human security and improved gender norms, values and practices. The evaluators conclude that the initiatives make small-scale but clear contributions to human security and gender issues in the communities and positive practical experiences for activists.

The lobby and advocacy component of the programme connected Libyan partner staff to various bodies so that they could attend international events and often supported Libyan partner staff in preparing their speeches, provided the finances for them to travel, and also organised or financially supported them to attend training. Once at this international stage, partners were able to participate and network with a wide range of organisations, and by doing so increased their own capacities. This is especially the case for the two main Libyan partners Tamazight Women Movement and Together We Build It. This led to inspiration and increased exposure of Libyan activists for national and international lobby and advocacy.

Although the programme is now coming to an end, with no continued funding to support its implementation, the evaluators find the improved skills, knowledge, motivation and networks of activists are likely to continue beyond the end of the programme. Several activists already had concrete plans to continue their work, although for them and many others there are large challenges to overcome in order to do so, including the fragile security situation and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, it should be noted that the programme was implemented with a spirit of perseverance and adaptation in what was a complex and highly dangerous context in Libya. International partner staff were unable to travel to Libya for the duration of the programme due to the ongoing conflict, making the role of the two main partner organisations in Libya even more vital. Activists experienced great pressures on themselves and risks due to the fragile security situation, yet found solutions to implement their initiatives and showed remarkable dedication and resilience throughout the programme implementation.

As the programme has ended, the evaluators' recommendations are aimed at future programmes that address similar topics and operate under similar circumstances. The evaluators recommended making the successful cross-cutting gender sensitive approach to programme implementation explicit in programme documentation and monitoring and evaluation activities. Similarly, they recommend that the importance and the specificities of the networking approach feature prominently in future iterations of the theory of change. The evaluators noted the fact that the programme was implemented in a context of closed civic space, yet this challenge was not very well elaborated in the programme's approach and that future programmes should highlight, elaborate on the challenges and analyse civic space issues, as well as the specific strategies implemented to address it. Finally, the programme successfully recognised the personal toll of the conflict on the activists and future programmes should replicate this support, provision of outlets and adjustments to programming.

## 2. Introduction

This report details the findings from the end-term evaluation of the Women and Youth as bridge builders programme, which was implemented in Libya from 2016 to 2020. The programme was implemented by a consortium led by Cordaid, in partnership with Human Security Collective (HSC) and eight civil society organisations based in Libya.<sup>1</sup> The overall goal of the programme was to establish an effective partnership between Dutch and Libyan NGOs to contribute to an enabling environment for women's participation and empowerment in Libya, allowing civil society organizations (CSOs), activists, men and women to play their role as bridge builders to increase human security and to contribute to a culture of peace. The programme aimed to increase the collective voice of local (individual) activists, CSOs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working at community and national level on the topic of women, peace and security. The programme was supported under the Women, Peace and Security instrument 2016-2019 and 2020 of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This program thus aimed to contribute to the general objective of the 3rd Netherlands' NAP 1325<sup>2</sup>.

The evaluation has been carried out by a team of experienced researchers: Nele Blommestein, Caroline van Koot and Fatima Moussawi. Nele, in the role of lead consultant, was responsible for the overall quality assurance of the evaluation. Nele was involved as an external M&E expert in this programme since the beginning. She facilitated three workshops (Inception, Theory of Change and Outcome Harvesting), and conducted the baseline and mid-term evaluation (together with Anne van Marwijk). With this knowledge of the programme and context, she ensured continuity of the M&E approach to conduct an efficient and relevant final evaluation. Caroline was new to the programme and as such ensured an independent, open, yet critical viewpoint of the programme and its achievements. Caroline was responsible for the implementation of the evaluation, the social network analysis, and the case study writing. Together, Nele and Caroline analysed the data and wrote the evaluation report. Fatima Moussawi was involved as the Arabic speaking researcher and conducted the interviews with stakeholders in Libya for the case studies and the interviews with Libyan partners to fill in the Sprockler survey.

### Programme characteristics

The long-term outcomes of the programme are divided across three pillars:

1. The **human security** situation with specific attention for women's safety is enhanced;
2. Harmful, underlying **gender** norms, values and practices are subverted in women and men's lives;
3. Local, national and international decision-makers are **opening spaces** for women and girls' participation in peace building, conflict resolution and prevention processes.

The intervention strategies include:

- **Capacity strengthening through training**, including: gender, human security, WPS, YPS research, development of local programme initiatives, risk assessments monitoring, evaluation and learning.

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<sup>1</sup> The consortium originally included the Women Peacemakers Program until the end of 2017 when they stopped their activities due to core funding constraints and thus their involvement in the programme.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nap1325.nl/>

- **Supporting CSO initiatives:** the programme has supported a number of initiatives proposed by CSOs and activists with funding of up to EUR 5000. Some initiatives were also awarded follow-on grants for a second phase of activities and funding.
- **Supporting lobbying, advocacy and networking:** providing a platform with international policy decision makers, networking between civil society within Libya, with international networks and policy decision makers
- **Evidence generation:** creating an evidence base through story collection within communities.

The two Dutch partners each contributed with specific skills to the programme. **Cordaid** led the consortium, oversaw the management of the programme and facilitated the network of local partners in Libya. Thematically, Cordaid focused on gender issues, supporting the Libyan partners with training and financial support for their initiatives and to develop the network further. **HSC** provided capacity building and guidance to the local partners to analyze, design and implement human security interventions, and ensured linking and learning from local civil society initiatives led by women and youth leaders to enhance human security and work towards a culture of peace. Both Cordaid and HSC supported Libyan partners with developing plans and carrying out lobby and advocacy at the national and international level, specifically related to the protection of women and women's participation in peacebuilding.

The network's eight Libyan Civil Society Organization partners are spread across the whole country. Two organisations - Together We Build It and Tamazight Women's Movement - were the original partners in the programme and took on a more intensive role in the programme than the other partners. They played a vital role in contributing to decisions taken by the consortium, connecting with their partners, coordinating, supporting and translating for the other partners. They provided input to workshop designs to ensure their relevance to the Libyan context, monitored the relationships within the group and altered the international partners when conflicts were arising. Selected staff from these organisations acted as focal persons for the international partners.

The full list of Libyan partners and their locations is as follows (main partners in bold):

- Tripoli: Makers of Hope and **Together We Build it**
- North/North-West Libya (Nafusa mountains, Tripoli and Zuwarah): **Tamazight Women Movement**
- Misrata: Dialogue and Debate Association
- Al Bayda: Goodness Brought us Together
- Ghat: I am Libyan, but My Child is Not
- Sabha: Al Nour
- Sabha: Fezzan Libya Organization

### 3. Methodology

The evaluation takes a mixed methods approach, including the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, to answer the evaluation questions and triangulate information.

#### 3.1 Evaluation questions

The evaluation questions are formulated in line with the scope of the evaluation, focusing on issues of Perceived Impact, Effectiveness, Relevance and Sustainability, as well as the Gender aspects of

the programme. The evaluation questions can be grouped in two main groups: 1) a focus on the capacities of activists (impact level in the programme's Theory of Change) and, 2) a focus on the results of the initiatives implemented by activists, as well as the lobbying and advocacy component (outcome level in the programme's Theory of Change).

### **Focus 1: Capacity strengthening of activists**

1. What stories do activists (men, women, youth) share about the contribution of the programme to their role as bridge builders at the community level, or advocates for women's rights? (Perceived Impact)
2. Which capacity strengthening intervention strategies (e.g. training, networking, support to lobby and advocacy) are perceived by key stakeholders to be most effective in strengthening their role as bridge builders? (Perceived Impact, Relevance)
3. What lessons can be drawn when comparing the end-line stories with those of the midline and baseline? (Perceived Impact)
4. In what way, if at all, did the programme contribute to a strengthened CSO network

### **Focus 2: Effectiveness**

5. What examples are there of the initiatives contributing to enhanced human security? How did this happen? (ToC pillar 1) (Effectiveness)
6. What examples are there of the initiatives addressing harmful gender norms, values and practices? How did this happen? (ToC pillar 2) (Effectiveness, Gender)
7. What examples are there of the programme contributing to opportunities for women and men to participate meaningfully and equally in peace processes and in conflict resolution & prevention? How did this happen? (ToC pillar 3) (Effectiveness)
8. To what extent has the project helped to generate outcomes in such a way that they are likely to last after the end of the project? (Sustainability)
9. How did insights from the MTR, and possibly lessons from other learning opportunities, lead to changes to the interventions, if at all? (Adaptability)

## **3.2 Desk research**

Desk research focused on reviewing existing programme documentation, including programme reports, harvested outcomes, research reports, and progress reports. Following the sampling of initiatives for the case studies, relevant documents for each initiative were also reviewed to feed into a rounded understanding of each initiative, complemented by the other methodologies.

## **3.3 Online story collection and survey on capacity using Sprockler**

Building on the story-led approach of the baseline and mid-term review, the final evaluation collected stories from activists about their experiences as part of the programme using Sprockler. Sprockler is a mixed-methods research tool that combines survey data (quantitative) with stories (qualitative). The stories gathered using Sprockler were used to answer evaluation questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8. Activists were asked a series of open questions, inviting them to describe their experiences as bridge-builders, as well as a series of closed questions to more precisely categorise their answers to the open questions and to gather a snapshot of their capacities.

The inquiry was introduced to activists during the evaluation kick-off workshop and activists were intended to fill in the inquiry online. However, due to a slow response rate despite active follow-up with activists in the following weeks, the evaluation team decided to conduct telephone interviews

with activists following the inquiry in order to ensure sufficient data was collected. Interviews were conducted in Arabic over WhatsApp or Zoom by the Arabic-speaking evaluation team member. A total of 35 responses were collected, with seven out of the eight partner organisations represented.

The Sprockler respondents provided their informed consent to participate in the inquiry and use of their data. In a few cases the respondents consented to quoting and mentioning their gender, but not their organisation. In one case, a respondent did not allow their responses to be used in the report. Respondents' names were not gathered in the inquiry to ensure anonymity.

The Sprockler responses are visualised in graphs. Percentages referred to in the text are calculated by splitting the bipole into equal thirds in order to assess the percentage of responses that fall within the middle third of the bipole, or the two extremes. The content of the stories was analysed through the lens of the evaluation questions, using MaxQDA for some stories to code the answers. To answer evaluation question 3, the responses were compared with those from the baseline and midline assessments where possible.

### 3.4 Social network analysis

A basic social network questionnaire was developed and filled out at the partner organisation level, to map out the relationships between the Libyan partners at the start of the programme and by the end of the programme. An additional open question was also included, to gather more personal perspectives on the networking elements of the programme. The results were fed into Gephi, a social network analysis software, and two graphs created to visualise changes in the network size and density between the start and end of the programme. The analysis also showed the intensity of the relationships between each actor. The results of the analysis were used to answer evaluation question 4.

### 3.5 In-depth interviews with community actors and activists

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders involved in the initiatives carried out by partner organisations in order to feed into the case studies. Stakeholders were identified according to the sampling strategy outlined in section 3.8, with the aim of gaining contrasting views on the initiative and its results. Interviews were conducted via WhatsApp or Zoom by the Arabic-speaking evaluator, based on interview guidelines that were developed by the evaluation team. Two or three interviews were carried out per initiative. Interview transcripts were drafted in English and analysed using MaxQDA, a qualitative data analysis software in order to identify patterns in the answers of different stakeholders per initiative.

Prior to the online interview interviewees were read an informed consent statement in accordance with the latest GDPR standards. All interviewees confirmed they were willing to participate in the interview and agreed for their answers to be anonymously quoted in the evaluation report.

### 3.6 Case studies of sampled initiatives

Six case studies were developed for each of the sampled initiatives, drawing together information from the desk review, in particular project proposals and reports for each initiative, as well as the interview transcripts from the in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. The case studies describe the initiative and its objectives, the stakeholders involved, the activities actually carried out, the nature of the results (related to the three pillars of the TOC), the success of the initiative in terms of

contributing to the long-term objectives of the programme as perceived by different stakeholders, the actors and factors that contributed to or hindered results being achieved, the challenges encountered and any unexpected effects. Common insights from across the case studies were also synthesised.

### 3.7 Harvesting examples of opportunities for women and men to participate in peace processes and in conflict resolution and prevention

To collect information on the results under pillar 3 of the programme, the evaluation team carried out a preliminary harvest of outcomes related to the global level participation outcomes of pillar 3 from the three annual reports, MTR and the track record. The consortium members (Cordaid, HSC and 2 resource organisations) then reflected on these outcomes, revised them, and added additional outcomes that were not yet captured in the harvest. The harvested outcomes were used in the analysis for evaluation question 7.

### 3.8 Sampling

**Sampling of activists:** Representatives from all organisations were invited to share their story and complete survey questions online in the weeks following the evaluation kick-off workshop. Effort was made to ensure that not only new organisation staff but also those who had been active for a longer time in the programme filled out the survey.

In total 35 respondents filled out the survey, representing all partner organisations, except Dialogue and Debate Association (DDA). The gender division between the respondents is almost equal, with 54% men and 46% women. Three quarters of the respondents are between 25 and 34 years old (26); 4 respondents are aged between 18 and 24 and the remaining 5 are older than 35 years old.

**Sampling of initiatives:** The approach aimed to ensure a diversity and representativeness of the initiatives included in the sample, whilst also recognizing the practical and logistical constraints that may prevent the sample from being fully representative. Partner organisations provided information about the availability of relevant stakeholders for interviews about their initiative following the kick-off workshop. The final list of initiatives was selected based on this list, whilst also taking into account the advice of Cordaid and HSC on which initiatives were most of interest for a case study, as well as the availability of staff to participate in interviews. The selected initiatives were balanced for focus (3 x gender and 3 x human security), covered various locations in Libya, included different types of target groups. The majority of initiatives received two rounds of funding.

Each case study aimed to interview three or four stakeholders involved in the initiative, including one CSO staff member and two external stakeholders, such as final beneficiaries. Ultimately, most but not all initiatives saw three interviews conducted. One initiative was only able to provide the details of two staff members, and two further initiatives were only able to provide the details for one external stakeholder and two staff members, which is a limitation of these case studies.

### 3.8 Limitations

The following limitations were encountered during the final evaluation:

- Due to the ongoing insecure situation in Libya and the corona pandemic restrictions, the evaluators could not travel to Libya. For the same reasons it was not possible to work with a Libyan consultant to conduct face to face interviews. Instead, an Arabic-speaking consultant

conducted the interviews for the case studies as well as the majority of the Sprockler survey interviews online. This may have resulted in further in-depth information not being shared by some respondents.

- Although both consortium and Libyan partners tried very hard to find external stakeholders willing to be interviewed for the case studies, they succeeded only in a few cases, due to several reasons. Some potential interviewees were found to be reluctant to be interviewed. It is suspected that they were afraid to speak up or stand out, which is understandable for those living under such insecure circumstances. There were also practical challenges such as finding a safe space to hold the online interview where the interviewee could speak freely and having a stable internet connection. This prevented the evaluation from diving deeper into the effects of the local initiatives.
- One partner did not participate in the Sprockler survey, namely the Dialogue and Debate Association (DDA). By the time of the organisation, the programme had lost touch with this partner due to the temporary closure of their office in Misrata and the limited possibilities of face-to-face meetings in Tunis in the final year of the programme.

## Case study – Combating the spread of illegal drugs in Ghat – a Human Security Initiative implemented by I am Libyan But My Child Is Not

**This case study describes the Human Security Project “Awareness of the Dangers of Drugs” implemented by I am Libyan but my Child is Not (IAL), a civil society organisation based in Ghat, as part of the Women and Youth as bridge builders programme. It is based on a review of programme documentation and interviews with two project staff and one person involved in carrying out training as part of the initiative.**

### Background

This initiative contributed to the human security theme of the programme, with IAL trained and accompanied by HSC. In 2017, Cordaid carried out a story collection workshop to build partner capacity in research through collecting stories on the daily safety of communities in Libya. The stories were also intended to feed into the development of partner initiatives - projects designed by partners with a budget of maximum 5000 EUR aimed at tackling either gender or human security challenges in the community. It was one of the stories collected as part of this work by IAL that inspired the design of the Awareness of the Dangers of Drugs initiative. IAL received capacity building and guidance from HSC, in particular in the design phase to carry out a conflict analysis to define the project, as well support on the project design and continuous mentoring throughout its implementation.

The story in question was that of a young man who started using drugs and subsequently became a drug dealer, before eventually rehabilitating himself and becoming an advocate for educating young people about the dangers of drug use. The initiative was deemed relevant due to the salience of the drug issue in Ghat, which, due to the town’s proximity to the Algerian border, is

widespread and threatens the safety and stability of families and communities. The initiative targeted youth, who were considered by IAL to be particularly vulnerable to the influences of drug dealers, as well as their parents. According to all interviewees, drugs are a human security issue in Libya due to the linkages with human rights violations, drug trafficking and human trafficking. They perceived a strong need to protect individuals, their families and community from the physical violence and insecurity that the drug trade contributes to, as well as the harmful norms and cultural practices that are associated with drug use and trafficking.

### The initiative

The first phase of the initiative took place towards the end of 2018 and saw the implementation of four lectures in secondary schools targeting 50 participants, and a sports event at the College of Education in Ghat targeting 85 participants, including civil society activists, local notables, and students who had attended the lectures and displayed a particular interest in the initiative.

The second phase of the initiative built on the first and saw three types of activities implemented: facilitated dialogues for students at the Ghat College of Education and the Al Barakat Higher Institute for Comprehensive Professions, focusing on the causes and dangers of drugs and their impact on different areas of life, including: financial situation, family, personal, religious, community, security and health. Following the dialogues students were invited to come up with recommendations to tackle the issue; Showing of the video with the former drug user and dealer, followed by discussion sessions (with whom) and the formulation of recommendations; Joint sports activities bringing together different community

members to come up with ideas for future initiatives to raise awareness and tackle the issue.

### Collaboration

During both phases and according to interviewees, IAL collaborated closely with a number of other organisations and institutions, many for the first time, including: the two educational institutions who also provided the venue for the activities to be held; the municipal police stations who assisted in organizing the activities and participating in the discussions by sharing their experience in dealing with drug-related security cases; the Department of Narcotics Control who participated as the official body responsible for tackling drugs in the municipality and shared facts and figures about drugs, users, dealers and methods of control; Ghat Security Directorate as the authority affiliated with all security agencies in the region, as well as prisons and patrols; sports clubs to support the organisation of sporting activities and to share their experience in youth sports promotion as a way to tackle drugs; Ghat General Hospital who shared data on drug abuse cases and the health effects of drugs. Furthermore, experts in health, social, security and religious issues provide additional context to the discussion.

### Results

The main results perceived by interviewees were changes in knowledge and awareness, behaviour or actions of the students, as well as their own capacity as project managers and trainers, and their organisation's capacity and network.

### Changes in the target group

In particular, with regards to changes in the **students**, interviewees stated that students increased their knowledge of drug issues, gaining a more informed understanding of the problems surrounding drug use, and were able to have a clearer understanding of the consequences of drug use. They also reportedly gained a better understanding of how to protect, prevent and deal with

*"Some of the people were aware that it is not okay to have drugs, but they had no idea about why it is wrong, and this initiative provided an explanation. We had a holistic idea by the end on how people can prevent and can save themselves, because our awareness increased and the risks became clear."*

Trainer

*"The expectations were low, and they got better with the time. Especially when men listened to women's ideas, suggestions and solutions. The way women participated in the sessions was very constructive and convinced men that women cannot but be a part of the solution."*

Trainer

insecure incidents involving drugs. Interviewees stated that parents who participated gained a better understanding of how and why youth can be easy targets for drugs, and some participants gained a feeling of responsibility to take action. Finally, interviewees also perceived changes in the behaviour and actions of students, mentioning that they had shared the information that they learned in the sessions with family and friends. They also mentioned that participants told them that since attending the sessions they had talked with people that they know who use drugs and warned them about the consequences and dangers. In addition, students reached out to IAL to ask about replicating the sessions, parents contacted IAL to inform them of drug users reaching out to students through women and young girls, and five ex-drug users started their own initiatives to tackle the issue.

With regards to gender mainstreaming, the initiative was considered by all three interviewees to have targeted women well. The interviewees felt that women's involvement improved male participants' expectations of women, in particular when they listened to women's ideas, suggestions and solutions and better understood the

impact that women can have on the drugs issue, through their collaboration with the security forces and their role in the protection of youth and families. Furthermore, the three interviewees mentioned that the initiative succeeded in giving female participants a voice, allowing them to share their own experiences whilst also informing them of places to seek support should they be threatened by drug dealers. Finally, the involvement of women was seen by interviewees as providing important alternative perspectives on the issue that enriched participants' understanding.

### Changes in the activists

With regards to changes experienced by the **implementing organisation** and the trainer, interviewees mentioned an improved ability to transfer knowledge effectively and confidently. Interviewees' feelings of responsibility and empowerment to take action on the issue also increased. One IAL staff member interviewed mentioned that the initiative built his capacity to cooperate with other organisations and concrete skills in strategic and financial management.

One interviewee also noted that human security was not a familiar concept in Libya and that tackling such a societal issue was a new approach for the organisation, which had previously focused on responses to natural disasters. Also new was the fact that in one of the sessions a woman was for the first time included as a trainer.

### Success factors

The factors for the success of the initiative that were mentioned by the interviewees and appeared from the document review were diverse. They included the **collaboration** between different partner organisations, including support and training and the financial support provided by Cordaid and Human Security Collective, the **salience** of the issue, which meant that both organisers and participants recognised drug use as an important issue in their communities and were quickly motivated to engage on the

issue, the use of **real-life examples** which had a big impact on the participants, and a **diverse and inclusive** approach, that involved different intervention strategies (sporting activities as well as awareness raising sessions and discussions) and different target groups, including women, men, youth, and the older generation.

### Challenges

Challenges were mainly perceived to be the **limited scope** of the initiative, in particular the fact that the number of students targeted was restrained by funding. One interviewee mentioned that more CSOs could have been included in the collaboration. **Practical and logistical issues**, such as electricity cuts and fuel shortages were mentioned by all interviewees. Finally, the **targeting** of the initiative was also a challenge, as youth who are most at risk of drug use are those out of school, and drug users and drug dealers were not directly targeted, due to the initiative strategy of working through schools.

*We felt strong, empowered and responsible as we were selected to be the message senders to young people and students, and we felt a strong sense of responsibility to limit the spread of the "drug disease".*

Trainer

*Implementation of the project gave me a lot of skills and allowed me to cooperate with other organizations, which added a lot to my knowledge and expertise. I started after that to collaborate with international and local organizations.*

Project staff

### Sustainability

There were several indications of the **sustainability** of the initiative, most notably one partner organisation who **replicated** this work in their own region and two interviewees mentioned that groups of youth had started actively sharing the knowledge that they had gained with others in their community. However, all interviewees mentioned a number of **challenges** to the

sustainability of the initiative, especially due to the lack of follow up from the schools that were involved and lack of support from official entities. The initiative was perceived

as **requiring continued support** in order for the effects to be sustainable, and to ensure that skills continue to be built and knowledge continues to be spread.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Evaluation question 1 – What stories do activists share about the contribution of the programme to their role as bridge builders at the community level, or advocates for women’s rights?

This question is answered by analysing the results of some of the questions from the story inquiry. First, the responses to the question asking about how their view on themselves as a bridge builder changed since their participation in the programme, are analysed. Second, stories are investigated, asking about a time when respondents felt they played a role as a bridge builder at the community level or when they were advocating for women’s rights. Third, the responses are considered about how their personal safety situation changed compared to the start of the programme to add information on the context. The contribution of the programme to these changes will be discussed next, under the evaluation question 2.

#### **Almost all respondents now see themselves as a bridge builder**

The inquiry asked how the respondents’ view of themselves as bridge builders changed since their participation in the programme. They were given four options, as can be seen in Figure 1. A total of 30 (out of 35) respondents answered yes: they now see themselves as bridge builder. The responses of both men and women describe a profound impact of the programme on their belief system, as can be read in the following quotes:

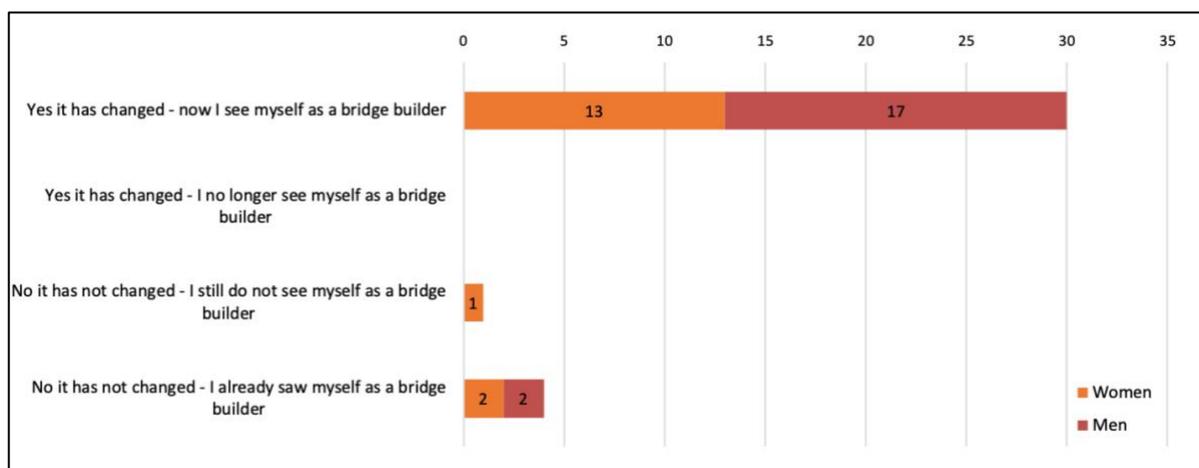


Figure 1. Change in self-perception as a bridge builder since participating in the programme

*“The impact was on my own perception. I am one of the people who was not convinced about the role of women in society. I was more convinced that [her role] has to be related to work inside of the home. This is why I believe that the program made a lot of difference in my perception. It changed my view and I thought that women should be more effective and act on the social level not only inside the house.”* Male, Goodness has Brought us Together

*“This program opened many opportunities for me as a Libyan civil society activist in a very sensitive time in the history of our country. First, it enabled me to participate in training workshops, and capacity-building in terms of GBV and HS. Before joining the program, I did not know much about those issues. During my participation in workshops, I became a trainer*

*myself, and that is a big move and transition from not knowing much about something to being a trainer in that field. Second, the program enabled me to come in contact with the Dutch and international experts in topics of HS and GBV and non-violent peace building. The expertise, the information, and the talks we had in the workshops were very beneficial. Finally, the program created a network of Libyan organizations, and enabled us to work together despite the political, and security challenges.” Male, organisation withheld.*

*“The workshops gave us space to talk about our personal issues and experiences and to talk about violence and discrimination. The idea of safe space itself was very important for me. I did not have the courage to talk about my personal experience. The space the program created empowered us as women and allowed us to empower others. We were trained to support others and to feel supported ourselves. We had different views about equality and it was important to know the ideas and to learn why these ideas developed this way and this allowed me to understand the background from where I come and this itself was a tool for me to play a better role.” Female, Tamazight Women Movement*

*“The initiative exceeded my expectation in self-development. For example, it added not only to me as a bridge builder but also as a person who had completely changed his perception on gender norms and now I can be more at ease dealing with people with different gender identities. I don't judge people anymore. I listen and I accept everyone and understand the needs of all.” Male, Goodness has Brought us Together*

*“After the project I have done, I became well known in the community where I live and this helped me to be a reference for many people who want consultation on different issues. At the same time, I was also on the TV which helped me to spread the knowledge even more.” Male, Fezzan Libya Group*

*“My perception about myself as a bridge builder improved a lot. Our participation in the human security project was beneficial for us and made us learn a lot about what we can provide. In the human security project, we engaged many youths in our projects and we never thought before that we could do that. Many of the young people we trained became owners of small businesses and for us this is a good initiative to build on. You have to also check the reaction of parents, they were very pleased with the results they saw with their children.” Female, Al Nour*

*“I have learned whenever I have any project implemented in Libya, to respect the norms, the traditions, to implement my vision of change without attacking the norms and without crossing the limits. I have learned to convince people as this is a sort of respect for freedoms from the perspective of changing for the better.” Male, Al Nour*

Four respondents already saw themselves as bridge builder and one still doesn't see him/herself as bridge builder. One respondent explains it as follows:

*“I don't think there was a lot of change in my perception because this was my work previously. But yes, we had a great project that I appreciate a lot. We benefited and we had good milestones, but this is an identity that we already had.” Male, Fezzan Libya Group*

### **Stories that illustrate how bridge builders brought about changes**

The inquiry also asked respondents to share a story about what happened when they felt they played a role as a bridge builder at the community level or a time when they were advocating for

women's rights. Figure 2 contains a word cloud of the stories showing the most frequented words. Some respondents (4) also mentioned insights they gained, similar to their response to the previous question, but many also shared examples of situations where there was an effect on others.

To analyse these stories the evaluators coded the stories to discover any possible other themes or patterns. During the coding, they looked at the **type of change** and **who was influenced**. Eight stories were found to be invalid and could not be analysed. They were either too short, or they described life stories of others<sup>3</sup> that were unrelated to the programme.

Out of the 27 analysed stories, a large cluster of stories describe the effect on one or more of the **beneficiaries of their local initiatives** that were implemented as part of the programme. Many of those are about challenging **current gender norms**.

*"Maybe it is not a clear story but it is about the evolution of the roles of women who participated with us. We had a group of women who are leaders of the initiative in their region. In the workshops that we managed, we approached them to have better involvement in the local community. One of them is now responsible for a child day-care centre, one is the leader at the national coalition of women, and one responsible for addressing educational issues related to women and young girls. I am proud of this and of all the work we have done for their progress."* Male, I am Libyan, but my Child is Not

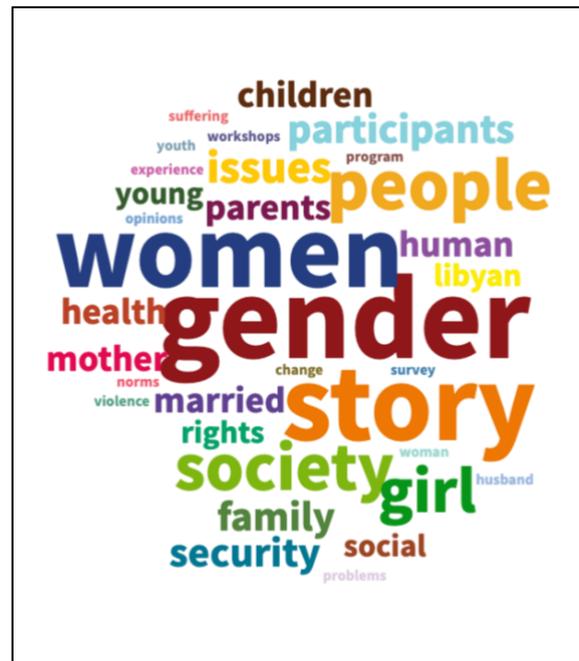


Figure 2. Word cloud based on stories shared by activists about their role as bridge builder

*"There was a girl who got married to someone that she didn't know right after her graduation from university. The parents agreed to the marriage and they pushed her to marry him and they moved to the US. When they moved, he changed and there the problems started. She was lonely at home and she was not allowed to leave the house or to watch the TV as they did not even have a TV at home, as he was an extremist and he did not accept her interaction with anyone for 5 years. During that period, she got pregnant and she gave birth to twins. Once she delivered, she was depressed and she could not get over it, which led him to give the newborns to Libyan people to take care of. She came back to Sebha for a health intervention and assistance and this was closer to a serious mental health issue. We tried to ask about her and to help her but first, we could not. He divorced her and got married to his cousin and took the children and went to the US again, which led her to suffer another severe depression. We started to contact her sister and look for other physicians and people to assist her. She started to go back to her normal state and every time we had a workshop she*

<sup>3</sup> The evaluators suspect that these respondents interpreted the story question as being similar to the story-collection activity they had been involved in during the programme.

*was invited so she could interact with people and learn more about what's happening around her. Her engagement in our activities made her get out of the situation she was in."* Female, Al Nour

*"The interaction of the participants with us in the workshops. We had female and male participants and, in the beginning, many of the guys were not excited about having female colleagues or vice versa. Later during the sessions, they started to be more comfortable towards each other. There were no barriers by the end as they felt united by the goals and they transcended the social norms."* Anonymous

*"There are many stories but the most important thing we had through this program is the "Super Banaweet" [initiative]. We focused on harmful gender norms and women in general and used comics which was a form of inspiration and many younger girls were impacted and wanted to work on something that is related to girls. By then we started to work on the story collection part and this gave us a push to work with the younger generations and we asked them to write stories that have harmful gender norms in high school for example and we called it "Super Banaweet" They had a workshop on how to develop the story taking into consideration all the security measures. The most surprising thing for me was the content they provided and I aimed to document their work and their thoughts, which is something that we did not pay attention to before. Very young girls were talking about the gender harmful norms and how they are affected. I was listening to them and I was shocked and this impacted me and gave me more of a new perspective."* Anonymous

Not only gender norms were challenged, but also the concept of **Human Security** is mentioned in a few stories. The following story is an example of how beneficiaries of the initiative of Goodness has Brought us Together were influenced.

*"Maybe the part that was most interesting for me is the environmental part that can impact human security, because it can impact individual health. We were concerned about the impact of the environment on the social life of people. I live in a city called Jebel Akhdar that is full of nature. We have a lot of nature violations in the region and this impacts human living. Once we addressed human security, we were able to know better how to go about it in a better way. We were able to change the thinking of some of the people, especially youth. We reshaped the young perception towards the environment."* Male, Goodness has Brought us Together

A few more stories specifically describe the effect of the initiatives on **youth**. The previous quote is one example and following story is another:

*"We were supporting youth through workshops, we taught them how to analyse problems and how to map the factors of the problems they also learned how to direct the cause of their projects. [...] The youth we had from the schools and who joined us, developed their own capabilities and became more effective in the society. We had them more involved in social work and this made us learn more that these youth are not only aiming to have fun but to learn so they can make change."* Male, Makers of Hope.

A small cluster of stories talk about changes amongst their **fellow participants** in the workshops organised as part of the programme.

*“I remember during one of the gender workshops we had in Tunis, we were discussing gender roles and what constitutes biological traits and what are gender roles. We got into a huge discussion with the male participants about this and we began to explain the difference. At first, we felt how difficult it was to make them see our perspective as women. Also difficult to make them change a set of beliefs that they grew up with. However, with time after we got to know each other and spend more time doing activities together, we started to notice a change in their beliefs and behaviours. Towards the end of our meetings before the pandemic, we (the ladies) had a reflection about this. We were very happy to see this transformation on their behalf. As they became more open to what they already know.”*  
Female, Together We Build It

Another story also describes how the participants, coming from different regions in the country, **settled their differences** in a constructive manner.

*“There was a moment that we were all connected to each other as peace builders in Libya, it was in 2019 after the war in Tripoli, where everyone was emotionally charged and especially the group from Misrata and the one from the east. We had a chance to reflect deeply on our political opinions and how these political opinions affected our social relationships. It was a moment of truth when everyone in the group unpacked their feelings and started to blame and almost fight, but we reached a point where we all realized that we also can relate to each other, and each one of us is hurt and had their own experience. I think that was a moment where we all learned to solve our problems in a healthy way.”* Female, organisation withheld

Another small cluster of stories found during the analysis, featured how respondents talked about being an **intermediary party**. These stories are exemplary for the role the respondents took on as bridge builders<sup>4</sup>, which is demonstrated by the following stories:

*“After 2011, two of my friends had a lot of tension because each one of them had a different political opinion and they started to fight. Unfortunately, their friendship was hugely affected because of the different opinions. I tried to bring them together again and this was hard with the increasing violence but after 8 years, I was successful in making this friendship back again.”* Male, Al Nour.

*“There was a girl who lives in Benghazi. She was from a conservative family. She wanted to become a social worker and to study international relations at the university but her family opposed that and did not want her to do that but to study another major. Later, she was interested in social work in general. But this required travel, to move and her family refused this. She had a hard time with them. The Libyan society is not rich from the side of social work and rarely people know what civil society is and what it does. She had a passion but they were against it. We asked to have a Skype call with them and she joined us and we tried to explain to them what civil society is and what she is supposed to do and what her role is. She was able to switch to the major she wants and we luckily influenced the family mindset regarding the role of their daughter. Even if it is a change at the level of one person, I think it is very important.”* Anonymous

The following story is an example of an **unsuccessful attempt to mediate**.

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<sup>4</sup> The definition of a ‘bridge builder’ used throughout the programme, and included as a reminder in the inquiry, states: A bridge builder tries to influence other people or tries to bring parties together.

*“We met a woman that has children. Her husband had a fatal disease. She took on the role of a father and a mother at the same time. When she asked her parents to have her part of the inheritance she was not given this right. However, she was able to transcend her condition. I tried as much as I could to mediate between her and her parents to secure her rights in the inheritance. I tried my best but unfortunately there was no solution because they believed that this was not her right. She only received a small amount.”* Male, Goodness had Brought us Together.

It is noteworthy that none of the respondents mentioned their **participation in international peace processes** as a moment where they influenced others or played a role as bridge builder. Even though for some activists the programme did enable their participation in the international arena, it is possible that they only associated the bridge builder term with their community work or their local initiatives.

### Most stories that are shared are seen as positive

After the story question about what happened when they felt they played a role as a bridge builder, respondents were asked to rate the tone of their story on a scale ranging from ‘negative’ on the left, to ‘positive’ on the right. Out of the 35 respondents, 69% considered their story to be positive, 20% felt their story to be somewhat neutral, while 11% (4) indicated their story to be negative. The 4 negative stories describe a situation where the respondent negotiated between parties. Some ‘negative’ stories describe a challenging situation, but have a positive ending, whilst others do not.

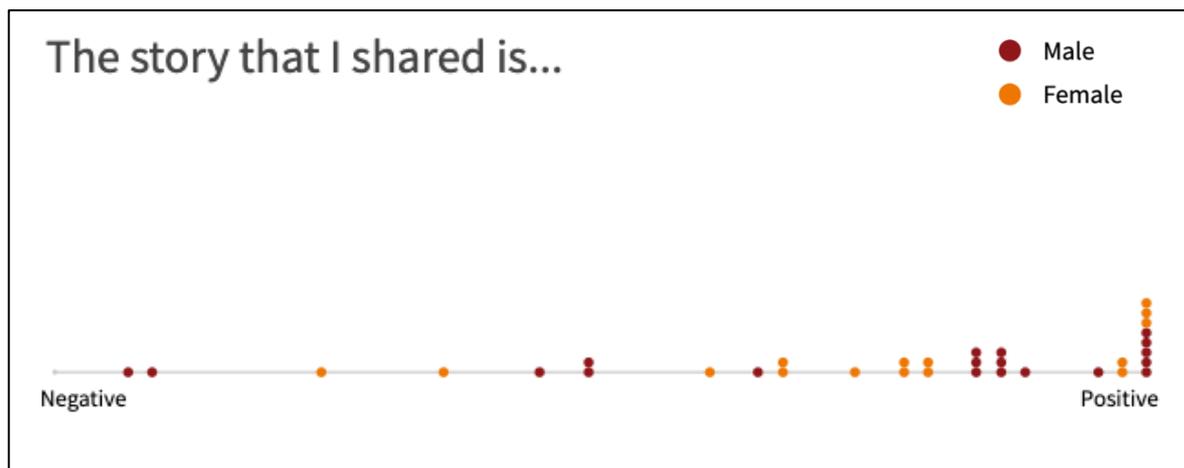


Figure 3. Categorisation by activists of whether the story they shared is positive or negative

### Both positive and negative emotions are found in the stories as well as other reflections from the inquiry by respondents, but most are positive

Looking further into the stories shared by respondents, as well as the additional reflections that they shared as part of the inquiry, we find a range of emotions. The most common of these is **pride**, with the highest number of respondents mentioning being proud of something that they did as part of participating in the programme, or simply for having participated.

The feeling of being **connected** is also mentioned frequently, which underlines the strength of the networking elements of the programme. Many respondents used the term “family” to describe the other programme participants. Feeling **happy**, rewarded or optimistic is also encountered.

Many respondents also mention increased feelings of **acceptance**, particularly male respondents who noted that their attitude towards women in particular had changed through participating in the programme and had become more accepting of women’s role outside the home. **Confidence** and responsibility were also feelings that were noted by respondents.

Respondents also mentioned more negative emotions, such as **fear and anxiety**, however these were often described as their feelings at the start of the programme, which were later overcome through their participation. In one case however, being in a dangerous situation and also hearing about the frightening experiences of others increased the feeling of anxiety. Feeling **emotional**, touched, or overwhelmed was mentioned a few times, particularly related to hearing the stories that were collected, or related to emotional exchanges with other participants in the training sessions. Feeling **sad** or helpless was also mentioned in such circumstances.

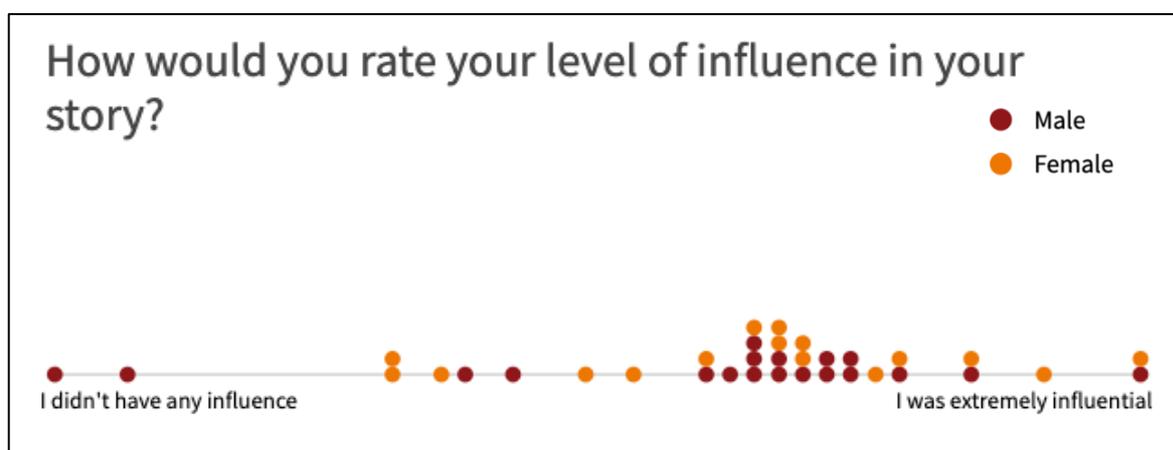


Figure 4. Self-perceived level of personal influence in the story

### Most respondents see themselves as playing a very influential role in the stories that they share

Respondents were asked to rate their level of influence in their story, on a scale ranging from 'I didn't have any influence' on the left, to 'I was extremely influential' on the right. Half of the respondents (51%) considered themselves to be (extremely) influential in their stories, 37% placed their dot in the middle and felt somewhat influential, and 11% felt they did not have any influence.

*“During the program, I was the lead trainer in our organization with regard to Gender issues, masculinities, and Gender-based violence. I conducted numerous workshops, and trained a number of civil society activists in our municipality of Ghat. As a result, they trained other women, girls, men and children on issues of GBV, and Human security as well as gender issues.” [Consent: mentioning gender is fine, but not organisation] 42227; Male; 35-44 years old*

### The security context in Libya: placing the work of bridge builders in context

To put the stories in perspective, the inquiry asked about perceived personal safety. First, respondents were asked to rate how their personal safety situation changed compared to the start of the programme from 'it has gotten a lot worse' on the left, to 'it has gotten a lot better' on the right.

A high percentage of respondents (43%) put their dot on, or close to, the middle, indicating that their situation has stayed more or less the same (Figure 5). Another 34% felt it has gotten better and 23% indicated the situation has gotten worse.

More men than women feel like their personal safety situation has gotten better. All women, except two, put their dot in the middle or left from it, indicating that their situation has stayed the same or gotten worse.

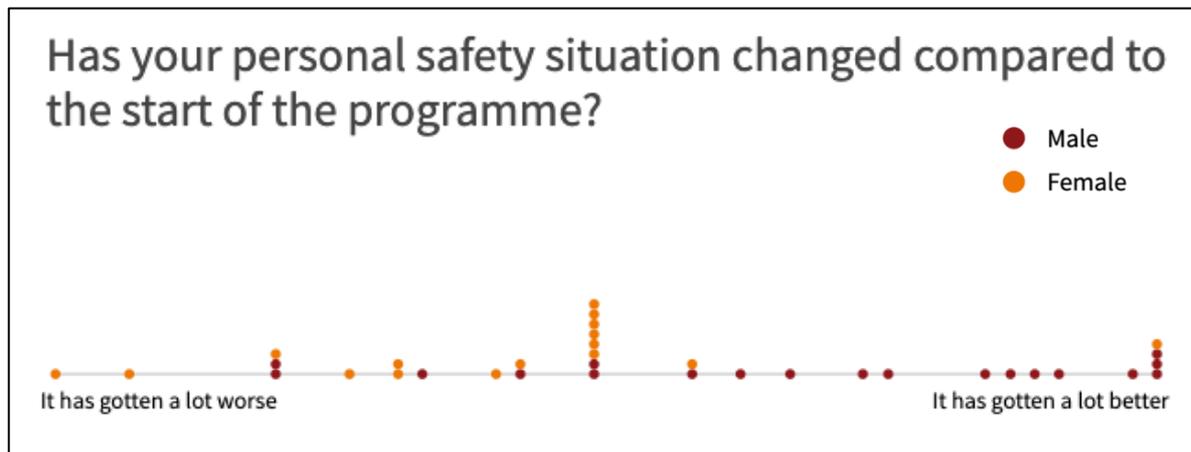


Figure 5. Perceptions of changes in personal safety situation, by gender

Looking at the responses by region, respondents from Tripoli, except one, perceive that their personal safety situation has stayed the same or has gotten worse (Figure 6).

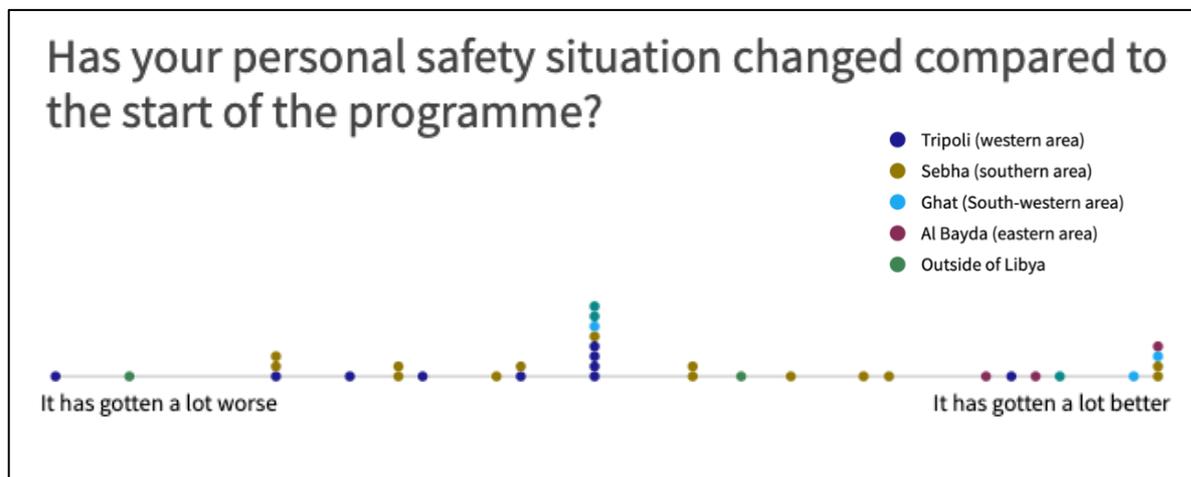


Figure 6. Perceptions of changes in personal safety by region

When looking at the combination of feeling of influence and feeling of safety, Figure 7 shows in the top right corner that a group of respondents felt influential in their stories, even though they felt their security situation stayed the same or worsened. This suggests that despite the deterioration of the security situation for some respondents, they nonetheless were able to share stories where they saw themselves as playing an influential role within a complex and dangerous context.

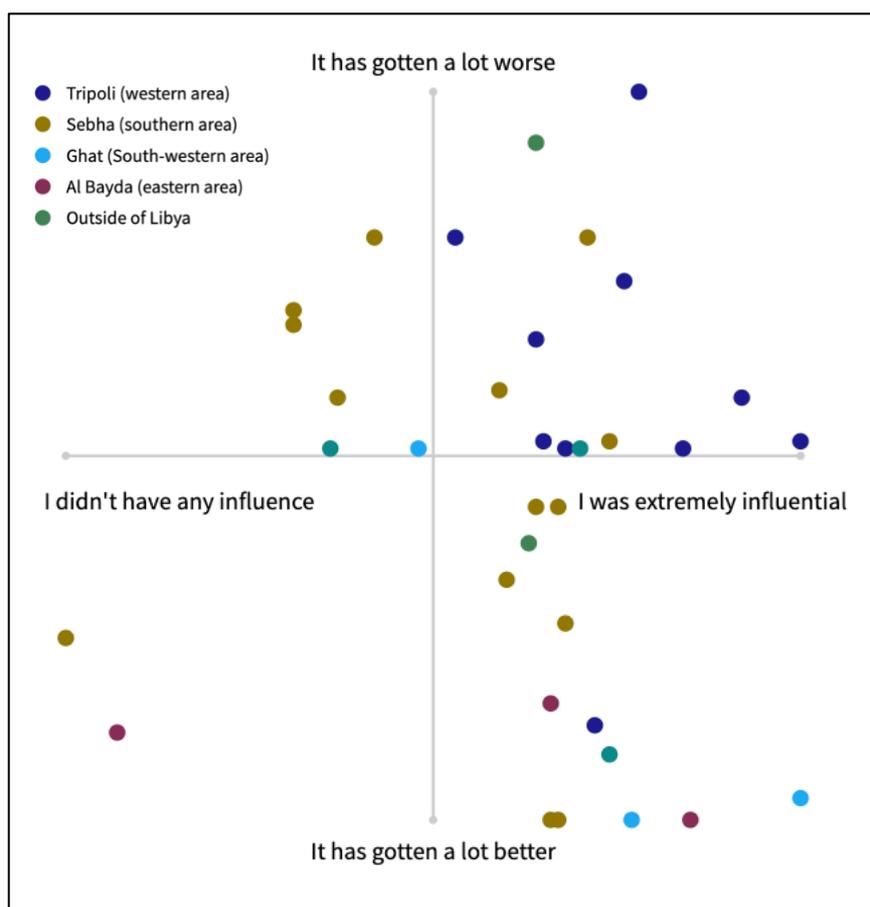


Figure 7. Level of influence (x) vs perception of security (y) by region

Perceptions of the safety situation are highly personal. Living in a country where the security situation is fragile and dangerous and hundreds of thousands of people across the country are suffering, is challenging. Every individual's personal situation and experience of safety in such an environment will be different. However, a difference was found between the more positive outlook on the security situation at the time of the mid-term evaluation (December 2018), which could be explained by the continued stress of living in conflict and the dashed hopes of a permanent ceasefire. Whilst the months prior to the mid-term evaluation saw the end of the Battle for Tripoli and renewed political engagement for peace, since then the situation only deteriorated, with 2019 characterised by an offensive on Tripoli by the Libyan National Army (LNA). Reports of the involvement of Russian mercenaries, as well as interference by Egypt and the United Arab Emirates point towards an escalation into a proxy war.<sup>5</sup> In June 2020, whilst the coronavirus pandemic had already started, the Government of National Accord (GNA) retook Tripoli fully and despite a ceasefire declared in December 2020 unrest, airstrikes and violence continue to characterise the Libyan security landscape. The latter could explain that all respondents from Tripoli, except one, perceive that their personal safety situation has stayed the same or has gotten worse.

### Perceived support from the programme to address security threats

Respondents were asked to rate how the programme improved their awareness, knowledge or tools on how to mitigate security threats from 'not at all' on the left, to 'a lot' on the right. Half (51%) felt that they knew more about how to mitigate security threats, another 40% put their dot in the

<sup>5</sup> Libya in chaos as endless war rumbles on, BBC (27 October 2019): <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-49971678>

middle implying the knowledge increased or decreased just a bit, and 9% felt their knowledge had not increased.



Figure 8. Perceived contribution of programme to improvement in ability to mitigate security threats

## Conclusion

Almost all respondents, both men and women, now see themselves as a bridge builder, and that this happened as a result of the programme. From the respondents' testimonies it can be concluded that the programme has had a profound impact on their belief system. Particularly the stories of men stand out, which describe that their perceptions about gender roles have completely changed due to the knowledge they now have, and they see the role of women in society in a different light. The testimonies of both men and women demonstrate that they feel empowered to continue to strive for a more just society.

When asked about a time when respondents felt they played a role as a bridge builder, most stories that are shared are seen as positive. Also, most respondents see themselves as playing a very influential role in the stories that they share. Both positive and negative emotions are found in the stories as well as other reflections from the inquiry by respondents, but most are positive.

Some respondents talked about changes amongst their fellow participants in the workshops organised as part of the programme and how their relations with each other improved. Other stories featured the respondents as an intermediary party by standing up for someone or mediating between two arguing parties. These stories are exemplary for the role the respondents took on as bridge builders. However, the majority of respondents talk about the effects on the beneficiaries of their local initiatives that were implemented as part of the programme in their communities. Most of those stories are about challenging current gender norms, although the concept of Human Security is also mentioned in a few stories and some others specifically describe the effect on youth. This suggests that the programme's strategy to empower CSOs and activists and support them in implementing local initiatives has bared fruit. Also, it suggests that the programme has applied an integrated and cross-cutting gender sensitive approach that has been successful.

These findings are all the more impressive when seen in the context of Libya, where the security situation is fragile and dangerous people are living in insecure conditions. A group of respondents still felt influential in their stories, even though they indicated their security situation stayed the same or even worsened.

## Case study – Rural Producer Bazar – a Gender Initiative implemented by Fezzan Libya

**This case study describes the Gender Initiative “Rural Producer Bazar” implemented by Fezzan Libya, a civil society organisation based in Sabha, as part of the Women and Youth as bridge builders programme. It is based on a review of programme documentation and interviews with one project staff and two additional women who joined the initiative to recruit women in rural areas to participate in the training sessions and the producer bazar. The interview was conducted with all three interviewees jointly. Unfortunately, it was not possible to interview participants of the Rural Producer Bazar as part of the production of this case study.**

### Background

In 2017, Cordaid carried out a story collection workshop to build partner capacity in research through collecting stories on the daily safety of communities in Libya. This project was a direct result of the story collection processes - during one of the interviews, the project leader of Fezzan was visiting a woman who had baked cookies. Since they were good, he suggested that she should try to sell them at the market, however the woman indicated that she didn't know how to go about it. This sparked the idea to support rural women by providing training and organizing a bazaar where they could sell their products. Both through the story collection and through the subsequent initiative male youth leaders of Fezzan Libya engaged with women in their community, which marked a change from their previous civil society experiences. The initiative received 5000 EUR for its first phase, and 12,253 EUR for the second phase. This case study should also be read in the context of the south of Libya where it was implemented, where cultural norms are still very conservative.

### The initiative

The first phase of the initiative was carried out from March to July 2019 and was entitled the Albazar Family Project. This phase aimed to support vulnerable women in reaching economic independence, create a source of income and enter the labour market by selling their own products and forming business partnerships with merchants to market their products to consumers. During this phase a survey with 100 respondents was carried out to better understand the economic situation of women, two workshops with the participation of 30 women were carried out to raise awareness of economic opportunities, focusing on the economic feasibility of micro projects and the importance of marketing and advertising. Finally, preparations for the bazar were made and 20 women producing food products, traditional and heritage products and handicrafts were promoted in the bazar.

The second phase of the project was carried out from August 2020 to December 2020 and was a continuation of the first phase, focusing on four municipalities in the south of Libya: Awbari, Traghen, Al-Qatron and Al-Ghuraifah.

### Results

The main results perceived by interviewees were changes in the behaviour and economic empowerment of participating women, as well as a contribution to changes in social norms around women's participation in economic activities.

### Changes in the target group

All interviewees mentioned that increased **economic empowerment** of participating women was one of the most important results of the initiative. Not only did women participating in the bazar gain income, but interviewees reported that several of the women continued their businesses after the bazar, and some of them very successfully.

For instance, in one case a **participant opened a small sweet factory**. The increased economic empowerment was linked to the changed behaviours of women, who were empowered to participate in the workforce. All interviewees related the economic benefits of the initiative as important factors both in changing social norms around women's participation in work outside of the home, as well as the sustainability of the initiative.

*"There was a massive feeling of change because after all of the conditions, seeing women transcending all of this to reach economic empowerment and engagement, that was really rewarding for all of us."*

Project Manager

*"...the bazaar had an impact and now most of the catering demand is more directed towards the service of women or the catering organised by feminist organisations and not by restaurants."*

Facilitator 1

With regards to changes in social norms, all interviewees perceived these changes as being part of wider changes in society since 2011, when the conflict started to push women out of their homes and into economic activities out of necessity. As behaviours changed, **social norms also began to change**. Specifically related to the initiative, one of the women involved in recruiting participants mentioned that some men now invite women to be part of such initiatives. The other recruiter mentioned that the catering sector in Sabha had been changed by the initiative, with catering now often sought amongst women or feminist organisations rather than restaurants. She also mentioned that some men now request their wives to find a job to contribute to supporting the family and that **women who work are now highly esteemed**.

### Changes in the activists

There were fewer changes in the activists mentioned by the interviewees, as their focus

in the interviews was predominantly on the changes in the women that they had been supporting. One of the women involved in recruiting participants did mention that she had a renewed **sense of commitment** to and energy for women's issues. There was no additional information from the interviews on this topic.

### Success factors

Interviewees found that the relevance of the initiative was an important success factor, with the initiative coming at the **right time** in the history of Sabha. The initiative was able to build its success on the back of changes that were already starting to happen in the local culture, such as the increasing acceptance of women's work. The **dire economic situation** in general also meant that the opportunity presented by the initiative to earn a living was highly relevant and a defining factor of its success. Furthermore, the fact that the bazaar was **held during Ramadan** was also seen as a factor of success by the project manager, as many of the women were producing food items which are high in demand during the holy month. The project manager also stated that the women involved to recruit female participants, were important success factors, as were the participants themselves who were highly motivated to undertake entrepreneurial activities.

### Challenges

The challenges mentioned by interviewees were first and foremost **practical**: internet and electricity disruptions and lack of fuel for transportation. All interviewees mentioned these challenges. One of the recruiters also mentioned that the initiative could have had more impact by having a wider scope, if additional time and resources had been available, allowing more women to participate over its lifetime.

### Sustainability

According to the project manager, both the organisers and the participating women are trying to keep the results of the initiative moving forward, with **new ideas** to continue

their businesses founded on a strong desire for economic empowerment. This positive assessment of the sustainability of the initiative was echoed by one of the recruiters, who stated that the skills and tools acquired by women through the training sessions gave women the power to transcend cultural barriers and **join the economic sector**, which would last beyond the lifespan of the initiative. Furthermore, she noted that participants from the bazar had kept in touch with her in a WhatsApp group to exchange

ideas and were both requesting new ideas and initiatives and also participating in another bazar, showing a continued commitment to build on the results.

*“Sometimes we have men inviting women to participate in these programmes.”*

Facilitator 1

*“In the beginning we were afraid that there might not be any engagement but I think that the economic conditions sometimes dictate how people behave and start new habits and this is what happened with us. Because women in this case would increase the income as well.”*

Facilitator 2

### 3.2 Evaluation question 2 – Which capacity strengthening intervention strategies are perceived by key stakeholders to be most effective to strengthen their role as bridge builders?

This question is answered by analysing the results of some of the questions from the story inquiry.

#### Active participation of activists

As part of the inquiry, respondents were asked to select the workshops they have attended (Figure 9). The workshop which most participants selected during this end-line evaluation was the second gender sensitive active non-violence workshop (27) that took place in July 2018. A group of respondents have been involved in the programme since the beginning: 18 respondents participated in the kick-off workshops. Two participants attended none of the workshops, but indicated to have participated in other activities of the programme.

The average number of workshops attended is 8 which indicates an active participation in the programme.

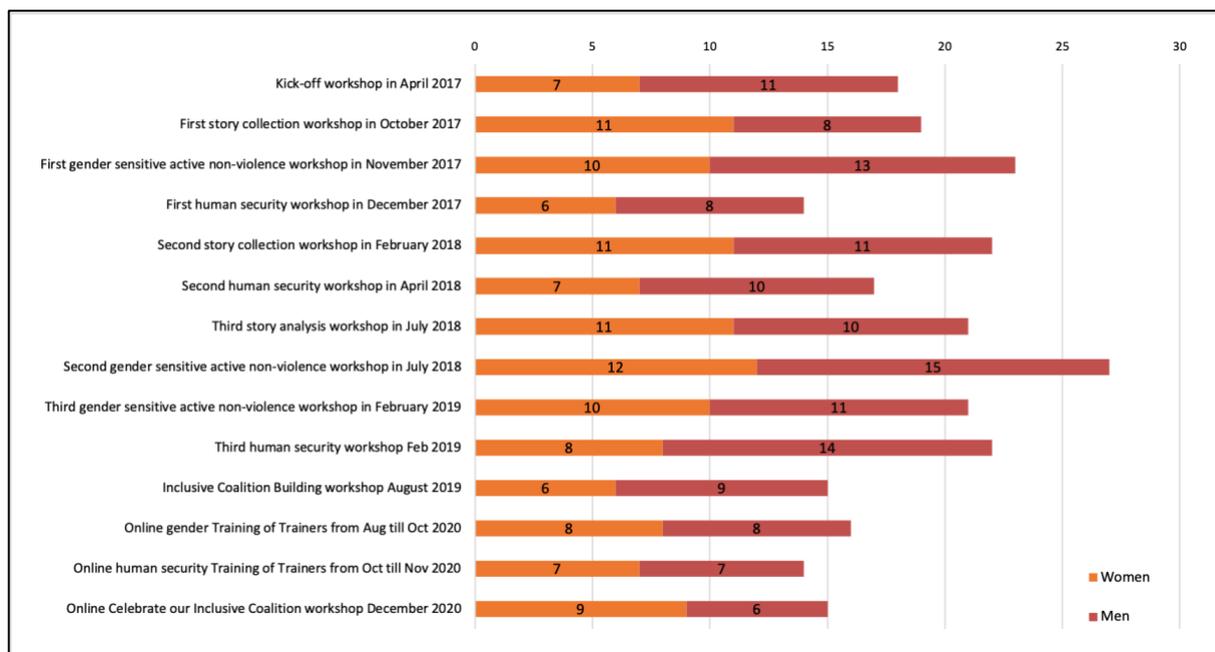


Figure 9. Participation in programme workshops

There are no real newcomers amongst the respondents. Only one respondent participated for the first time in February 2019, while the rest joined in 2017 or 2018. However, not everyone stayed until the end. Eight respondents had left the programme after the workshops in February 2019 or even earlier.

#### Training and networking were seen as making the biggest contribution to their work as bridge builders

Respondents were asked to select up to three programme interventions from a list of 7, and indicate which of those helped them the most (Figure 10). Subsequently, they were asked to share one memorable moment of the program and describe how it made them feel. This moment could be one thing that happened, that they learned, that was an eye opener or that they were most proud of.

Figure 10 shows that **training workshops** were selected most often (25 times). Amongst the shared memorable moments, these examples mention training workshops:

*“The first workshop I attended was very special for me. I felt that I am with people I have worked with for a long time and people who are willing to teach me through wonderful discussions and dialogues. I really enjoyed all what I have learned and the difference that was marked in that first participation was remarkable in my professional path.”* (42598) Male, 25 - 34 years old, I am Libyan, but my Child is Not

*“The best memory I had is the sessions on gender and violence we had in this program. I did not know about these concepts before but once I learned about them, my entire perception had changed and I owe it to the program.”* (42550) Female, 18 - 24 years old, Al Nour

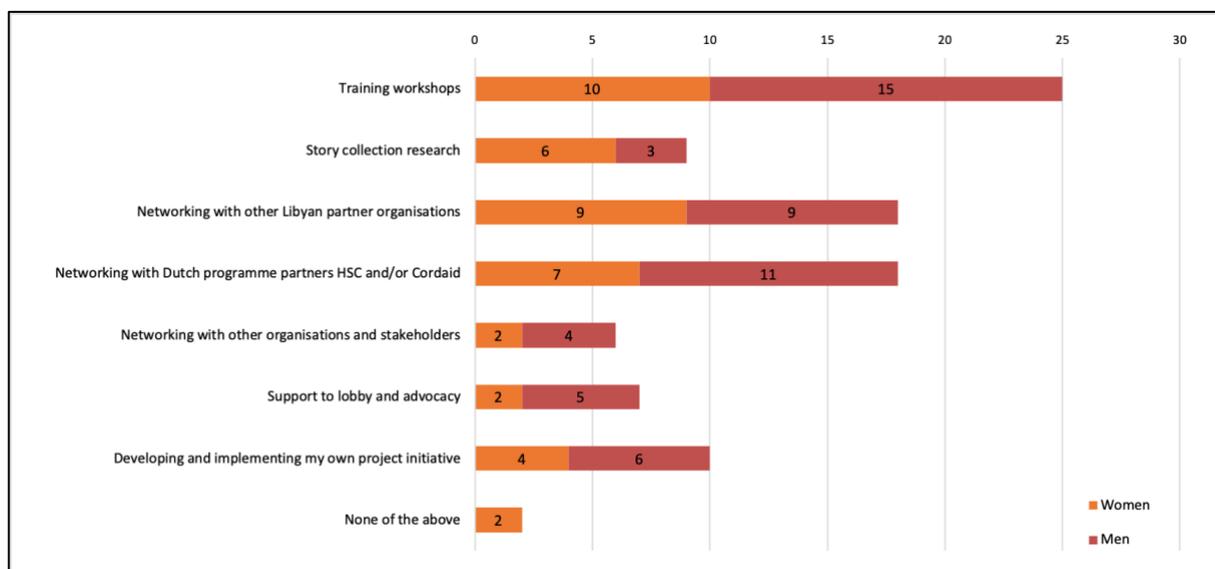


Figure 10. Programme strategies perceived by activists to have contributed most to their work as bridge builder

Next, two programme interventions relating to networking were both selected 18 times, namely **networking with both Dutch programme partners HSC and/or Cordaid** and **networking other Libyan partner organisations**. The following descriptions of memorable moments reflect on networking:

*“I definitely remember a lot of things but maybe the best memory is how this project gathered organizations from different areas in Libya. It gathered youth that I never thought could be gathered in one place. The participants were from different groups. This is why the network that was built was very important for me.”* 42545, Female, 25 - 34 years old, Makers of Hope

*“For me, the connection with the different organizations is something that I appreciated the most because of all the things that we learned and because of the links we had between eastern and western areas. This type of geographical connection is what I appreciate the most.”* 42382, Male, 25 - 34 years old, Fezzan Libya Group

*"It is the first time we deal with international organizations. The positive vibes they gave us was really important and impactful and we also appreciate learning how to hold responsibility and how to take all the elements seriously and timely. This was the most memorable thing for me."* 42424, Male, 25 - 34 years old, Goodness has Brought us Together

*"The diversity we were exposed to was very enriching and amazing. We heard a lot of stories and we were all together sitting and talking and I always ask myself why we don't have the same case everywhere in society. The other memorable thing for me is the exchange that we had with the group. I remember at some point we had an exchange with another group from Holland and it was important to know about different contexts but also how similar the issues can be. We wanted to make the same change."* 42442, Female, 25 - 34 years old, Tamazight Women Movement

*"[...] The best thing that happened to me in this program is that I was introduced to young people from different places in Libya and we discussed our issues and later the issues of the country and we felt a sense of community. We also understood the structure of society through the participants. I had the privilege to participate with the Human Security Organization as they also tried to respect our norms and traditions and did not impose anything on us. They accepted almost everything when we addressed diverse issues. [...]"* 42527, Male, 25 - 34 years old, Al Nour

As helpful programme intervention, **developing and implementing my own project initiative** was selected 10 times. This is an example of a memorable moment related to sharing the results of a project initiative:

*"[...] Most importantly was when we showed the results of the projects we have done. There were fears about the differences, but after the sessions all the fear was cleared up and we felt a form of peace, and we were happy with the results of the project. We completed 90% of the project goals and this is really rewarding for us, especially since the context itself presented a lot of challenges. We are proud of this, especially that we are aware that we are creating a peaceful context in a war zone."* 42455, Male, 25 - 34 years old, Fezzan Libya Group

The **story collection research** was selected 9 times, as being a helpful programme intervention. The following memorable moment shares the insights that resulted from the story collection research:

*"The most shocking moment for me when they showed the results of the first story collection results analysis. "Car" was the most used word in all of the collected stories. Although almost everyone drives in Libya, cars were the main tool of harassment, kidnapping and threatening to other people's lives. I became more alert, and vigilant about strangers' cars since then. I felt ashamed of how some individuals use cars to endanger other innocent people's lives in a supposedly religious, conservative society like the Libyan society. It also made me uncomfortable as a young man because young men were the most targeted by kidnapping and harassment on public roads. After that workshop, I was travelling to Tripoli on my way to Tunis for another "Results Cultivation" workshop when the car I was in was shot at twice within 10 minutes by the two fighting parties at the time, and I really felt that as a Libyan, I was worthless, and I might be only a number that would be mentioned in the news when they talk about how many people died that day. I was faceless, valueless and as if I had no life, no family, no friends, no parents and siblings, and no value whatsoever in this society."* (42227) Male, 35 - 44 years old

Another memorable moment talks about the meeting with Dutch parliamentarians, which happened in February 2018:

*“One of the memories I have in mind is when the Dutch members of parliament attended a meeting with us as organizations especially that we could not meet with MPs from Libya. The meeting was very effective and we addressed many important issues with them. I was very proud of attending that meeting.”* 42360, Female, 45 years old or older, Al Nour

Finally, one respondent shares its most memorable moment as follows:

*“The best memory is standing by the side of women. Because I related the support of women to my relation with my sisters and this space allowed me to learn more how to fight for their own rights.”* 42484, Male, 35 - 44 years old, Goodness has Brought us Together

### Positive perceptions of programme relevance

The inquiry also examined relevance by asking respondents to rate to what extent the programme responded to their needs in your role as a bridge builder from ‘not at all’ on the left, to ‘a lot’ on the right. Half of the respondents (54%) stated that the programme responded to their needs a lot. Only 6% indicate that the programme did not cater their needs, while 40% rated the programme’s relevance as somewhat neutral by placing their dot close to the middle although still on the positive side. Why a group of respondents was only somewhat positive cannot be explained by the evaluators. No follow-up question was asked in the inquiry, and the remaining analysis doesn’t reveal any explanation either.

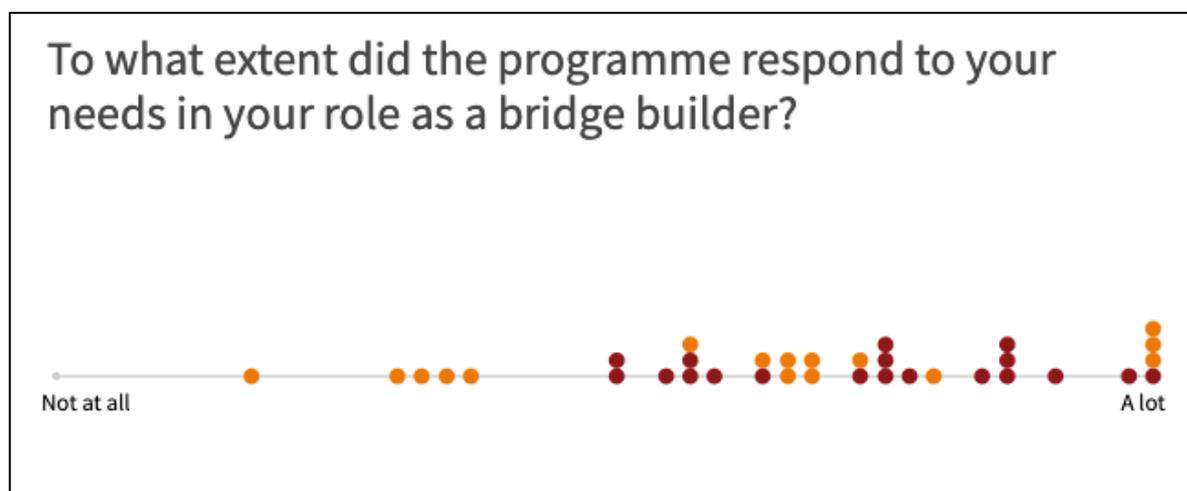


Figure 11. Perceived success of programme in meeting needs as bridge builder, by gender

### Conclusion

With an average of 8 attended workshops, the respondents were overall very active participants in the programme. There are no real newcomers amongst the respondents, but not everyone stayed until the end. Also taking into account that not all participants were paid staff members of the organisations this points to the active participation of activists.

The respondents found training and networking, with both Dutch programme partners HSC and/or Cordaid as well as other Libyan partner organisations, as making the biggest contribution to their

## Case study – Youth Talent Forum – a Human Security Initiative implemented by Fezzan Libya Group

**This case study describes the Human Security Project “Youth Talent Forum” implemented by Fezzan Libya Group, a civil society organisation based in Sabha, as part of the Women and Youth as bridge builders programme. It is based on a review of programme documentation and interviews with two project staff, as well as a teacher and a social activist both of whom assisted with the implementation.**

### Background

This initiative contributed to the human security theme of the programme, with Fezzan trained and accompanied by HSC. In 2017, Cordaid carried out a story collection workshop to build partner capacity in research through collecting stories on the daily safety of communities in Libya. The stories were also intended to feed into the development of partner initiatives - projects designed by partners with a budget of maximum 5000 EUR aimed at tackling either gender or human security challenges in the community. Several of the stories collected as part of this work by Fezzan inspired the design of the Youth Talent Forum initiative. Fezzan received capacity building and guidance from HSC, in particular in the design phase to carry out a conflict analysis to define the project, as well support on the project design and continuous mentoring throughout its implementation.

### The initiative

The Youth Talent Forum aimed to provide a creative outlet for youth to channel their energy in a useful and positive way, show their talents and divert them from engagement in negative activities. In doing so, it aimed to address the lack of opportunities for youth that can push them towards smoking, drinking and violence. The idea for the initiative was developed in 2018 by Fezzan

in collaboration with youth, social activists, students and school teachers. Specifically, the initiative aimed to spread awareness and inspiration amongst young people, discover and nurture youth talent through connecting youth with experts, promote peaceful coexistence between the different groups in Sabha, and revive the city theatre scene by creating a theatre group to raise awareness of social issues. The initiative targeted school pupils aged 8 to 18 and was later expanded to include youth up to age 25. Talent open days were held in five schools, as well as a mother’s day festival, several plays and awareness raising activities including workshops for youth aged 18 - 30.

### Collaboration

The initiative saw collaboration between Fezzan and a number of specialists, including youth representatives, social workers, psychologists, and work specialists. School teachers and institutional training centres, as well as university professors were consulted on some relevant issues.

### Results

The main results perceived by interviewees were related to improved interactions or exchange between youth of different backgrounds in a safe space and improved confidence, motivation or capacity of youth to work on their talents. The implementing organisation also identified increased opportunities to work with other actors as a result of the initiative.

### Changes in the target group

First and foremost, interviewees mentioned that a primary result of the initiative was the **convergence of different groups** of youth in a safe space. This included youth from different tribal groups, as well as girls and boys. Whilst 120 people had originally been targeted, the initiative ultimately reached 400 people, which was perceived by Fezzan staff as a key

result and indicator of the success and relevance of the initiative. One interviewee mentioned participants of the forum as part of the same “family” and it is this safe space that allowed youth to express themselves freely. Bringing different groups together was also seen as a way to **reinvigorate the art scene** in Sabha, by inspiring other initiatives to take an artistic approach to their activities.

Changes in the **awareness and attitudes of participants** was also noted, notably from a passive spectator role in the awareness raising sessions to a more intentional engagement with the activities, with participants focusing more on their own personal and social development. Furthermore, one interviewee mentioned that **attitudes of parents** had changed, becoming more accepting of their daughters’ participation in theatre and other activities. The artistic approach was also seen by several interviewees as an effective way to promote social messages, as well as gaining access to areas in Sabha that would have previously been impossible.

Changes in the **capacity of youth** was also emphasised by interviewees; in one case a girl who had been a beginner in photography at the start of the initiative has since become a professional photographer and in another example an actor has continued their work and become a well-known influencer in Libyan society. Changes in the capacity to build a collaborative relationship with others was also mentioned by one interviewee.

#### Changes in the activists

Interviewees mentioned that the initiative had brought a number of **opportunities to work with other organisations**, for instance Fezzan was invited by UNESCO to participate in some of their activities and the organisation was awarded the “Libyan Award for Creation”.

Furthermore, one interviewee mentioned that preparing and implementing the initiative helped to **organise their own thoughts** and see issues more clearly, leading to a greater

clarity of concept and goal for what the initiative could reach and the possibilities of social change through art and soft power.

*“We had a girl with us who used to be a beginner in photography, she is now a very professional photographer and she offers us a lot of help with her skills.”*

Social activist

*“The main idea about music and art was that it is entertainment and that’s it, but it’s through the forum that we had strong political and social messages. After one of the plays that a member of the municipality attended, he told us that he got the message.”*

Teacher and trainer

*“Families became more engaged and accepting of their daughters’ engagement in theatre and activities once they witnessed their success.”*

Social activist

#### Success factors

The main success factors identified by interviewees were the diverse approach, that included not only diverse forms of talent (art, theatre, sport, etc) but also diverse societal groups, in particular different tribes. Whilst the **inclusion of different tribes** was challenging, it was seen by all interviewees as a key element of the success of the initiative, as it was key in promoting peaceful coexistence and also protected the forum from security threats. The **personal investment** of the implementing staff was also noted as a factor of success, as their extra effort helped to overcome budget restraints and ensure that the initiative could be implemented in the way that they originally intended.

#### Challenges

Only one interviewee mentioned any challenges, and these were related to the inclusion of different tribes, which as mentioned earlier was also seen as a key

element of success. Other challenges were of a **practical nature**, for instance identifying a suitable location for the forum, making financial arrangements, organising transport and ensuring the safety of students.

### Sustainability

Interviewees noted that the initiative had **inspired several other initiatives**, such as one called “Spotlight” for talents and another called “N’ish Al Farha” (We Live Happiness)

which could not continue due to administrative issues. The cultural office also contacted Fezzan to ask for support to develop a similar project but due to the COVID-19 pandemic this did not proceed. Schools also planned to continue with activities related to the initiative in order to ensure continuity but again due to the COVID-19 pandemic these were postponed.

work as bridge builders. Another helpful programme intervention identified was the development and implementation of project initiatives.

Respondents demonstrate positive perceptions of the programme's relevance. Half of the respondents stated that the programme responded to their needs in their role as bridge builder a lot, while another group rated the programme's relevance as somewhat neutral although still on the positive side. The evaluators have not found an explanation as to why a group of respondents was only moderately positive. We can only guess that the circumstances they live in call for more action, funds and peacebuilding and that it is in that sense never enough.

### 3.3 Evaluation question 3 – What lessons can be drawn when comparing the end-line stories with those of the midline and baseline?

This question is answered by comparing the findings from the baseline and midline with the findings from this endline evaluation.

#### **An equal gender division amongst participating activists**

The gender division between the respondents at endline is almost equal, which was also the case at midline. This was different from the baseline study where the majority of the respondents were women (9 out of 11). The suspected reason for the majority of female respondents in the baseline was: *"this may be indicative of the organisational composition of the CSOs within this project"*. This may have been true at baseline, as not all partners had joined at the time. It can now be concluded that the group of people representing the partner organisations is now more balanced for gender.

#### **A slight shift in the age composition of activists**

The distribution in ages has shifted slightly compared to the results of the midline and baseline. Relatively more younger people had participated in those earlier measurements. At the endline, relatively fewer people are between 18 and 24 years old. As most participants have participated from the beginning until the end, it may be explained by the fact that these young people have now passed the age of 25 and moved one category up.

#### **Stories now emphasise more activists' role as bridge builders**

During baseline and midline, the stories also showed how participants in the programme took a lot of initiative, but more stories were about others, such as friends and family, and not specifically about the beneficiaries of their local initiatives in their communities. Now, at the endline, the effects of the programme's strategy to support participants through story collection research, capacity strengthening and accompaniment in developing and implementing local initiatives are more apparent and show that it has borne fruit.

Already at the midline stories were shared about challenging current norms, and these have increased at the endline as now most stories are about challenging current gender norms. This underlines the positive effects of the programme's attention for challenging gender norms.

#### **Perceptions of self as a bridge builder are strong, but perceptions of own influence have decreased slightly**

This endline shows the same picture with regards to respondents' feeling like a bridge builder, namely that they absolutely feel like they are bridge builders. However, from baseline to midline, an increase in the level of influence has been noted. Even though half of the respondents consider

themselves to be (extremely) influential in their stories, more respondents at the endline compared to midline felt somewhat influential. This slight decrease may be explained by the worsened security situation, which can create a feeling of being powerless.

#### **Perceptions of self as a bridge builder equalised between men and women by endline**

At midline, it was concluded that for men the perception of themselves as bridge builder had changed less in comparison to women. This difference was not found at the endline. In fact, the stories of men stand out, which describe that their perceptions about gender roles have completely changed due to the knowledge they now have, and they see the role of women in society in a different light.

#### **A deteriorating perception of the security situation**

During the mid-term evaluation all respondents felt their personal security situation had stayed the same or improved. Also, a correlation was found between how influential respondents felt in their stories, and their personal safety situation. Those who felt more positive about their personal safety situation, also felt extremely influential in their stories. This suggested that those who felt like they had more influence to change the world around them, were more likely to view it in a better light. During this end line evaluation, such a correlation was not found. In fact, a group of respondents felt influential in their stories, even though they felt their security situation stayed the same or worsened. This suggests the programme continued to positively influence the respondents feeling of influence, despite a worsened personal security situation.

#### **Activists have a strong feeling of being part of a network in Libya**

At midline, almost half of the respondents felt fully part of a network of bridge builders, and the other half felt somewhat part of a network, whereby the network was defined as in Libya as well as internationally. At endline, a division was made between feeling part of a network in Libya and internationally, whereby a large majority of respondents feel part of the network of bridge builders in Libya, and a smaller majority feel to be more part of a network of bridge builders internationally. It is hard to compare the two datasets as the formulation of the questions and answer options were different, but it is safe to say that the networking has been a successful element of the programme.

#### **Conclusion**

The trends that were found when comparing baseline, midline and endline confirm the positive increased effects of the programme such as the programme's strategy to support local initiatives and its attention for challenging current gender norms.

A lesson that can be drawn relates to the deteriorated security situation. At endline a deteriorating perception of the security situation was found. Potentially, this could have caused a slight decrease in the feeling of influence since midline. However, a group of respondents felt influential in their stories, even though they felt their security situation stayed the same or worsened. This teaches us that programmes like this can still have a positive effect, even under deteriorating security situations. In fact, one could argue that programmes like this might even have increased importance under such circumstances.

Another lesson relates to the involvement of men. While the midline concluded that men's perception of themselves as bridge builder had changed less in comparison to women, by the endline the changes experienced by men and women were at the same level. This underlines the importance of investing in men, equally to investing in women.

One final lesson relates to the importance of the network; there is a clear indication that the feeling of being part of a network has developed over time and by endline the majority of respondents felt part of a network in Libya. This suggests that network building evolves positively over time, as gradually new relationships are built and strengthened and both the space and time is required to form a resilient network.

### 3.4 Evaluation question 4 – In what way, if at all, did the programme contribute to a strengthened CSO network?

To answer this evaluation question, we draw from a social network analysis of the relationships between Libyan partner organisations, established based on a social network questionnaire that was filled out by each organisation as part of data collection for the evaluation. Additionally, relevant questions from the Sprockler inquiry and a review of project implementation strategies and input from Dutch partner staff fed into the analysis.

To place the question of the programme's role in creating a strengthened CSO network in context, it should be noted that the programme intentionally sought to bring organisations with opposing political views, from different geographical locations and with different opinions on gender, security and the political solution for Libya together in the network. The conflict has increased tensions between groups in Libya and these tensions have generally increased over time. Different groups consume different polarising media sources and with their own personal trauma related to the conflict. The programme's approach was not to take the easy route of bringing together organisations with similar views, but to face the diversity and its challenges head on, whilst attempting to build trust, monitor the situation and invest in building the relationships. This approach and the difficult context brought a number of challenges, including conflicts between partners in the network that required the intervention of the Dutch partners. It is in this context that the following results should be interpreted.

#### **Mediation and understanding as a general approach**

According to Dutch partner staff, they tried to foresee potential tensions, make advance arrangements to prevent them, discuss bilaterally with partners when tensions arose in the general Libyan context as well as specifically between partners, and postpone workshops when tensions were too high. The Libyan resource persons also played a vital role by checking in with the wider group in advance of each workshop and being focal points who all could trust to be fair mediators. Following a dispute between a partner from the east of the country and another from the west, Cordaid and HSC organised, with support from the resource persons, a day for the partners to meet in Tripoli to try to resolve the issue.

#### **Network-building activities**

Participation in the programme itself, and in the workshops and training sessions that it entailed, brought together organisations from different backgrounds. According to Dutch partner staff, all workshops included an element of dialogue, non-violent communication and appreciative listening, and rather than try to avoid conflicts used disagreements as opportunities to develop such skills. In response to rising tensions in 2019 the programme also organised two coalition building sessions in August and December 2019. During this time partners were given the opportunity to sign a joint Memorandum of Understanding, and later, following the invasion of Tripoli, to sign a joint statement, although these were not ultimately supported by all partners. The programme also planned to offer joint funding opportunities for initiatives in 2020 however these plans were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Social network analysis

The social network questionnaire asked each partner to note, for each of the other 7 Libyan partners, 1) whether their organisation had worked together<sup>6</sup> with that organisations in the last three years, 2) if yes, whether those interactions could best be described as weekly, monthly, a few times a year or once or twice in total, 3) whether they would describe the majority of interactions between the organisations as positive, neutral or negative, and finally, 4) whether the relationship existed prior to the start of the programme. The responses were inputted to Gephi, a social network analysis tool, which allowed to analyse and visualise the relationships between the organisations, as shown in Figures 12 and 13.

### How to read the social network graphs

Each social network graph consists of partner organisations (called “nodes” in social network analysis) and relationships (called “edges”). The size of each node represents the connectivity of the organisation: larger nodes indicate that the partner organisation is connected with a larger number of other partners, smaller nodes indicate relationships between that organisation and a smaller number of partners. In Figure 13, the strength of the relationship is also visualised by the weight of the edge: partners who reported more frequent interactions with another partner are linked by a heavier weighted edge and those who reported less frequent interactions are linked by a lighter weighted edge.

Both nodes and edges on each graph are also colour coordinated along the same lines: darker colours indicate more highly connected organisations and more frequent interactions and lighter colours indicate less connected organisations and less frequent interactions. The assessment of whether the relationship was mainly positive, neutral or negative is not visualised on the graphs, however the responses to this question were almost entirely positive. It should be noted that such assessments may have been influenced by social desirability, as according to Dutch programme staff, discord amongst the group did arise (as had been expected due to the diversity of the group) and was mediated during coalition building workshops.

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<sup>6</sup> “Worked together” was defined as: collaborating on a project, sharing information or resources, providing moral support or encouragement. The definition explicitly did not include instances where both organisations were present in a training.

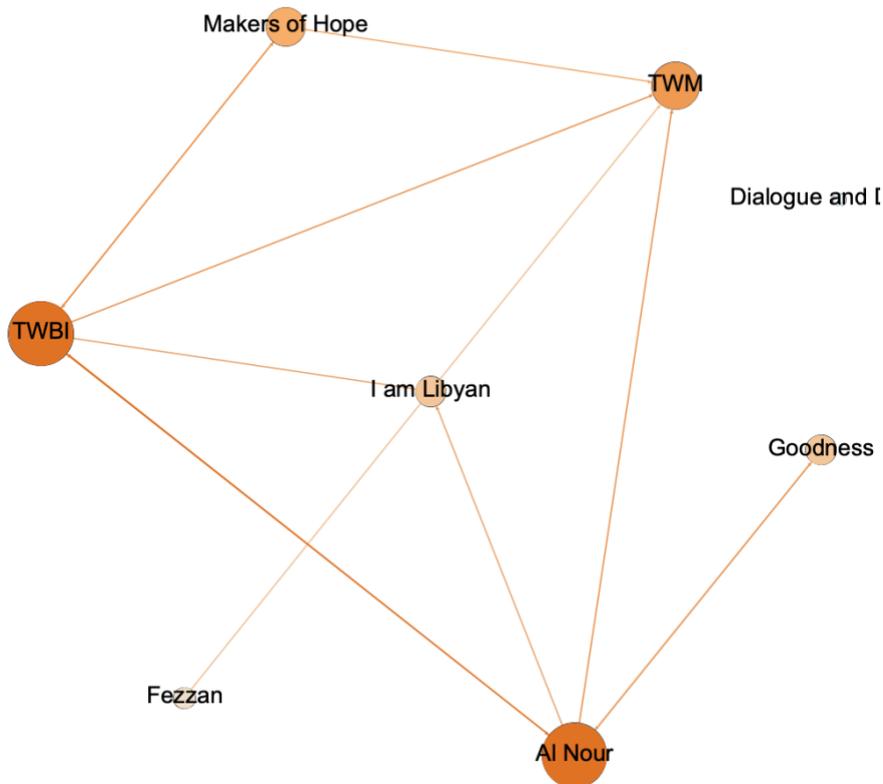


Figure 12. Social network between Libyan partner organisations prior to programme implementation

Figure 13 shows the relationships between the different Libyan partners prior to the programme’s launch. Here we see that Together We Build It (TWBI) and Al Nour are the most highly networked organisations, reporting relationships with four other partners prior to the start of the programme. On the other extreme, Fezzan and Goodness Brought Us Together report only one connection with another organisation, and Dialogue and Debate Association is entirely unconnected to the network.

Overall, we see that although connections exist at the programme baseline between partner organisations, the **network is not particularly dense** – on a scale of 0 to 1 where 0 indicates entirely un-networked nodes and 1 indicates a complete network where all partners report relationships with all other partners, the density is 0.214. Furthermore, the average degree centrality (connectedness) of partners in the network is 1.5.

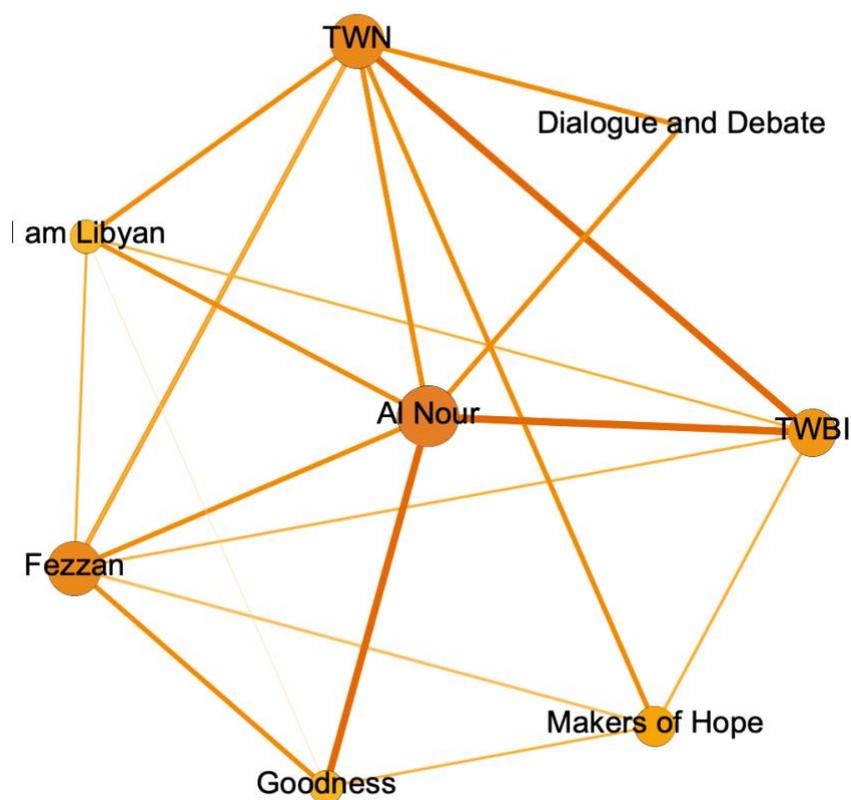


Figure 13. Social network of Libyan partner organisations by the end of the programme

By the end of the programme, we can immediately see from the visualisation of the network in Figure 13 that **network density has notably increased**, in numeric terms from 0,214 at the baseline to 0,446 at the endline. The number of partners with whom each partner reports a relationship has increased, indicating that **partners are more highly networked** (higher degree centrality). For instance, Dialogue and Debate Association who at baseline was entirely excluded from the network remains the least networked partner but now reports relationships with two other partners. Al Nour and Fezzan remain the most highly networked partners, each reporting 6 connections, but are joined by Tamazight Women’s Movement (TWM), also reporting 6 connections, and TWBI with 5 connections.

Overall the average degree centrality (connectedness) of partners in the network has increased to 3,125 in comparison with 1.5 at baseline. Regarding the intensity of the relationship, we see that TWM and TWBI report the highest intensity relationships with one another, as well as Al Nour and TWBI, and Al Nour and Goodness Brought Us Together, indicating that these organisations have collaborated most often and likely have the strongest relationships.

#### Sprockler data on the network

The social network analysis is supported by the Sprockler inquiry data, where 83% of the 35 respondents felt that participating in the programme helped them to feel more part of a network of bridge builders in Libya (Figure 14). For instance, respondents mentioned a desire to continue with the network after the end of the programme, to deepen the existing connections or expand it to include additional organisations.

*“The thing that we are thinking of the most is having one common project that has the same goal and that goes deeper into bridge building because since 2017 until now, we did not have*

*one common project. I would like to communicate with them to have one unified work.”*  
 Male, Goodness Has Brought us Together

*“To me the most important thing from now on is to improve the project as well as much as we can and as much as our abilities allow and to expand it to other places in the south, east and west and to bring them all together.”* Male, Fezzan Libya Group

Furthermore, insights from one open question that was asked as part of the social network questionnaire, allowing partners to provide any information they wanted about the network, indicated that most of all the network was appreciated for the opportunity it presented to share ideas and gain support from other organisations. Respondents also mentioned that the network increased their awareness of issues in other areas of the country and in some cases even changed their opinions on certain issues.

*“These organizations can advise you whenever you need them and can stand with you whenever you are in need.”* – Al Nour (Social network survey)

*“... we always communicate over the phone, exchange ideas and give some updates. This is important for us because it excites us to work more and it gives us moral support and it corrects some of our wrong perceptions.”* – Goodness Has Brought Us Together (Social network survey)

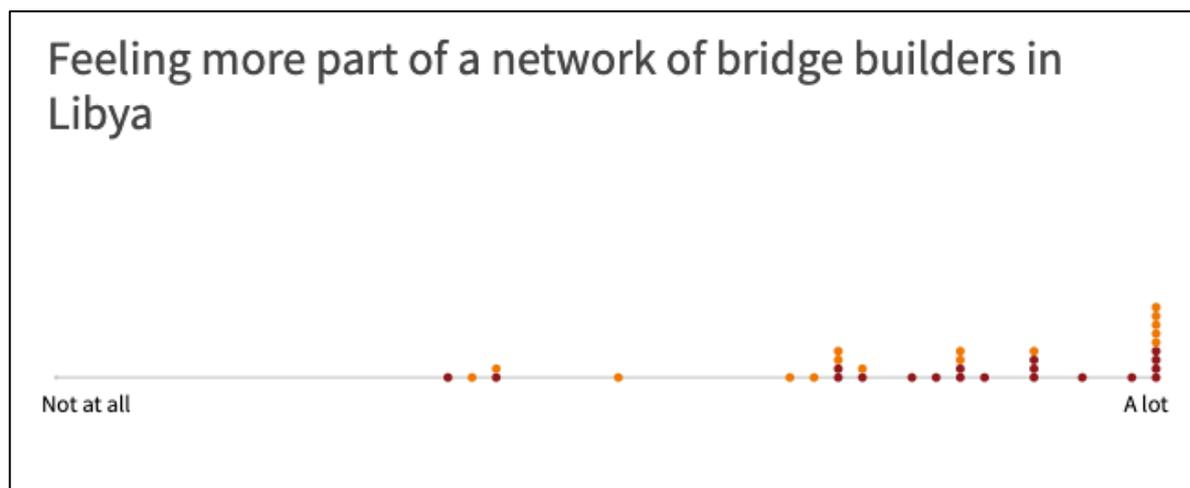


Figure 14. Perception of being part of a network of bridge builders in Libya, by gender

The feeling of being more part of a network of bridge builders internationally is lower at 43% (Figure 15), however still appreciated by some respondents. In particular, we see that the two main partners (TWM and TWBI) as well as Goodness Has Brought Us Together, feel the most part of a network of bridge builders internationally. However, two respondents from TWM feel less that way and two hardly feel part of a network of bridge builders at all. Respondents from the other partners are fairly spread across the spectrum. This suggests that the feeling of being more part of a network of bridge builders is largely dependent on the individual, rather than the organisation.

## Case study – Combating Early Marriages and Educating Women about their Rights – a Gender Initiative implemented by Al Nour

**This case study describes the Gender initiatives “Combating Early Marriages: and “Educating Women about their Rights according to the Personal Status Law” implemented by Al Nour, a civil society organisation based in Sabha, as part of the Women and Youth as bridge builders programme. It is based on a review of programme documentation, as well as interviews with the project manager and two stakeholders who were invited to participate in the initiative: one civil society activist and lawyer and one journalist and head of the cultural section of the educational office of Sabha.**

### Background

In 2017, Cordaid carried out a story collection workshop to build partner capacity in research through collecting stories on the daily safety of communities in Libya. The stories were also intended to feed into the development of partner initiatives - projects designed by partners with a budget of maximum 5000 EUR aimed at tackling either gender or human security challenges in the community. A number of stories were collected where women mention being married at a young age or being pressured into marriage, followed by violations of their rights, abuse, abandonment and marginalisation. This reinforced the perceptions of early marriage as an issue, which had already been identified by Al Nour project staff, who had noted high divorce rates in Sabha amongst young women who had married at a young age. The Al-Nour organization decided to focus the initiative on the issue of early marriage, which they assessed as a highly underreported and overlooked issue in Libya, despite its significant consequences. The initiative aimed to increase awareness amongst parents in

Sabha on the negative impact of child marriages on girls and young women. In a follow-up phase, the initiative continued this work with a focus on women’s rights. This initiative contributed to the gender theme of the programme, with Al Nour trained and accompanied by Cordaid.

### The initiative

In the first phase of the initiative, Al Nour organized two seminar sessions to raise awareness on the physical and psychological impact of early marriages on young girls. Together with gynecologists, obstetricians, legal experts, psychologists and religious leaders they trained 20 individuals, including social workers and a wide variety of community members such as religious leaders, legal experts, and municipality members, to recognize and respond to early marriage issues. The sessions discussed the underlying causes that contribute to the emergence of this phenomenon, such as religious traditions which encourage early marriage as a way to preserve chastity and honor. Al Nour also created a radio campaign in which they interviewed people related to this topic which was broadcasted and reached the whole region. During the sessions Al Nour noticed that women had very little understanding of women’s rights, and requested additional information on this topic, which inspired the design of the second phase of the initiative.

The second phase of the initiative was a continuation of the first, focusing on women’s rights according to the Personal Status law. The second phase was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to an increased focus on the online aspects of the initiative. In particular, a Facebook page was created called Libyan Women’s Rights in the Personal Status Law, which provided information about the different laws in Libya protecting women’s rights. In addition, a logo

was designed, brochures were prepared and printed, an opinion poll carried out, and a radio show was recorded and aired several times over the course of a week. Finally, in May 2020 as the COVID-19 situation improved, another workshop was held targeting 20 women, with the appropriate precautions taken to reduce COVID-19 risks. The workshop resulted in the formulation of recommendations, in particular to the local authorities to include women's rights and Libya's laws in the school curriculum. In implementing the initiative, Al Nour collaborated with a number of other civil society organisations and a radio station which broadcast the radio show.

### Results

The main results perceived by interviewees were changes in knowledge and awareness of the participants, as well as increased knowledge and motivation of those involved in implementing the initiative.

### Changes in the target group

The primary changes in the target group perceived by interviewees were increases in **knowledge and awareness**. All interviewees noted that both participants and organisers increased their knowledge of the law on early marriage and women's rights in Libya. All participants, regardless of their background and or the stage they were in life were seen as being strengthened through this increased knowledge. In some cases, interviewees mentioned that they transferred this information to their family members and friends.

In particular, the journalist participating in the workshop noted that her knowledge as well as that of the other women in the workshop increased significantly. She noted that it was the first time that she encountered information about the law on personal status or on marriage. She also believed that participants changed the way that they look at men, society and their rights following the workshop. Furthermore, the lawyer who participated in the training mentioned that

the sessions **addressed the fears** among women of the law, by clarifying that in fact the law in many areas supports women's rights. This was echoed by the journalist who saw this as increasing **optimism** amongst participants with the knowledge that the law can be used to protect themselves. The lawyer also perceived that the increased knowledge **empowered** women in an external context of ignorance and extremism.

*"This new approach is the strength of the initiative because it showed women in Libya that 85% of the law is for their own benefit and on their side."*

Lawyer

*"It changed my perspectives and vision. I was always taught that I, as a woman, am someone who should support the men but now it is a form of partnership and support that is accompanied with full awareness of rights and personal limits."*

Journalist

*"We all wished we knew what we know now way before."*

Journalist

*"It was totally new to me and it was an eyeopener. During my education and during work I never knew this information, even the media doesn't discuss it. It was very beneficial."*

Project Manager

Furthermore, both the lawyer and the journalist interviewed noted that the sessions increased their own motivation to act on this topic. In particular, by increasing their sense of responsibility and reinforcing a volunteering spirit to serve their communities to claim their rights. Nonetheless, all interviewees also recognized that these

changes required a much longer timeframe to spread further in society.

There were limited perceptions of interviewees that the initiative succeeded in **changing the behavior** of participants. The project manager mentioned that some of the participants subsequently held similar initiatives, that women who had a problem related to their rights started to work on it actively due to their new expectations towards themselves, and that many women asked for more information about early marriage or women's rights in law. She also mentioned that participants had taken the phone numbers of lawyers and called them to find out more about their issues. There were no indications that behaviour changes extended to changed decisions on the age of marriage, although this is not to be expected within the short timeframe of the initiative. It should be noted that neither the lawyer involved in the training nor the journalist participating perceived that participants' behavior had changed due to the initiative.

The project manager also highlighted that the initiative successfully reached **governmental institutions** within the municipality of Sabha, who asked the organization to provide information and data about the phenomenon of child marriage. This result also appears in one of the outcomes harvested and reported in 2019 about the initiative. Furthermore, the outcome harvesting session that was organized by Cordaid and HSC in November 2019 also noted the influence of the initiative on the religious leaders, however this was not mentioned during the interviews.

### Changes in the activists

Al Nour's project manager of the initiative mentioned that she learned about many issues during its preparation, including the problems that can follow divorce for men and women. She mentioned that this increased knowledge led her organisation to advocate for reforms to the laws that are from the 60s and 70s and no longer relevant in today's society.

*"We were able to establish better relationships with judges. As a result of the initiative, they were more inclined to work with us on the early marriage initiative. We received a request from the court to provide more statistics on early marriage."*

Al Nour Organization (2019), Outcome Harvesting Workshop

*"Religious leaders, imams, and teachers were initially not concerned with early marriage and its effects, but after our meetings, and after we presented them with information about the medical risks involved, they became convinced about the harmful impact of early marriage. So, as a result of our workshop with religious leaders, the relationship and perception changed."*

Al Nour Organization (2019), Outcome Harvesting workshop

### Success factors

Diverse factors that contributed to the success of the initiative were mentioned by interviewees, in particular the **relevance** of the initiative, demonstrated by good attendance and requests for additional sessions. The **diversity** in the approach, combining not only the workshop but also the radio work and the development of booklets. Finally, the **active participation** of women during the sessions was also noted as contributing to increasing the knowledge of others, not only of the legal issues but also the social issues faced by women in society.

### Challenges

Challenges were linked to **practical and contextual** issues as well as the scope of the initiative. Two interviewees mentioned that the extremes that are present in Libyan society, including pressure from Islamists, religious obstacles and the culture of patriarchy are issues that presented challenges to the success of the initiative. This

also meant that the initiative needed to allocate more budget to ensure a secure location for the sessions to take place. All interviewees thought that the **scope** of the initiative should be enlarged, for instance to integrate the sessions into the school and university curriculum, with more support from official entities such as the Ministry of Education, or to add more **tangible activities** to complement the awareness-raising approach. Finally, practical issues included **electricity** shortages which impacted the availability of air conditioning, poor internet connectivity, and difficulties in withdrawing project funds from the bank.

### Sustainability

With regards to sustainability, all interviewees were in agreement that the changes envisaged are **long term changes** and that

additional and more diverse activities are needed in the future to continue this work and monitor its impact. One interviewee mentioned that there was an interest to replicate the work in other regions, however it is not clear whether this will occur without additional support or funds. The project manager mentioned concrete future plans, in particular to **publish a book** about the important laws for women and to open a centre for legal support to women in Sabha, however this required future support from local and international organisations. Overall, given the strong changes in knowledge of participants it is likely that changes on a small scale may persist, however wider reaching changes in society are unlikely without additional support and financing.



on a leadership position on an initiative in their organisation for the first time, which was a deliberate focus for HSC.

### Conclusion

As part of the interviews for initiatives on human security, interviewees were asked how they defined this concept. Human security refers to “the security of people and communities, as opposed to the security of states. Human security recognizes that there are several dimensions related to feeling safe, such as freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom from indignity”.<sup>7</sup> In the interviews, respondents defined human security in different ways, often linking to the way that they address the issue through their initiative. For instance, interviewees from Fezzan noted that human security was about ensuring a good and safe life for people, with freedom whilst also respecting the freedoms of others. TWM linked the concept of human security with issues of intersectionality and discrimination. I am Libyan, but my Child is Not (IAL) saw the concept as related to human rights, and how issues such as drug trafficking impact human security through exposure of those involved to violence and human rights abuses. One interviewee mentioned that it extended to protecting people from harmful norms such as child marriage and honour crimes. Overall, the responses showed that both activists and external stakeholders had learned about human security as a concept through their participation in the initiative and saw how it comprised multiple dimensions beyond physical security.

Whilst initiatives recorded a wide range of results, these are predominantly at the intermediate outcome level, such as changes in knowledge, attitudes, motivation, capacity, increased interactions and networking, and behaviour. As per the strategies of the initiatives, these outcomes are ultimately intended to contribute to human security, however based on the available evidence it is not possible to judge the extent to which these intermediate outcomes indeed had an effect on the human security situation in Libya. Outcomes that could potentially contribute to improved human security include building a community of diverse participants or **increasing engagement or networking between different groups** (mentioned by all initiatives in some way), **increasing the capacities of initiative participants and/or of implementing staff**, and **changing people’s attitudes** (all initiatives). The TWM initiative, and to a lesser extent the Fezzan initiative were also seen as creating **safe spaces** for people to discuss and exchange and both the TWM and IAL initiatives were widely seen by interviewees as **increasing the knowledge** of participants, and also of implementing staff.

The initiatives achieved these changes by providing opportunities for people, particularly youth, to come together to **discuss and exchange** on issues related to human security, for instance by creating safe spaces or events with **diverse participation**. They also conducted **training sessions** or provided opportunities for existing skills to flourish. Both of these strategies contributed to changing knowledge attitudes and actions of participants.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://gppac.net> <https://www.hscollective.org/our-work/working-themes/human-security/>

## Case study – “Maren’s Story” – a Human Security Initiative by Tamazight Women’s Movement

**This case study describes the Human Security Project “Maren’s Story” implemented by Tamazight Women’s Movement, a civil society organisation based in Tripoli, as part of the Women and Youth as bridge builders programme. It is based on a review of programme documentation and interviews with two project staff and one participant in the online workshop carried out during the second phase.**

### Background

The initiative contributed to the human security theme of the programme, with Tamazight Women’s Movement (TWM) receiving extensive capacity building and accompaniment by HSC, in particular to carry out a conflict analysis to define the project, as well as support on the design of the initiative and mentoring throughout its implementation. TWM conducted an online survey to collect first-hand stories from people facing discrimination, which resulted in 65 stories about gender-based violence and race-based discrimination. The Maren’s Story initiative was created based on inspiration from these stories.

### The initiative

TWM produced an animated video telling the story of a young girl, Maren, who faces a variety of challenges in her community, yet overcomes them to become a lawyer and protect the rights of people suffering discrimination. The video was used as a tool to start a conversation about discrimination in society, with the long-term goal of leading people to question and recognise acts of discrimination, whilst also standing up to it. The main target groups were youth aged 18-30 from the Amazigh, Tabu and Arab communities. A social media campaign surrounded the launch of the video, with the goal of advertising discussion sessions that

were held for participants to discuss the content of the video and share and document their own experiences. Three discussion sessions were held in the first phase, Tripoli and Yefren, including one which was a rehearsal for participating activists, which included nonviolent communication skills and how to engage with non like-minded stakeholders. The rehearsal also covered roleplays on how to facilitate discussion sessions in contentious situations to prepare the activists for the responses they may get from the public.

The first phase of the initiative was severely impacted by the deteriorating security situation in Libya, with the armed conflict that broke out in April 2019. This led to the postponement of the initiative for two months, from June to November 2019. In addition, the discussion sessions were relocated to safer cities and spaces. One discussion session that had been planned for Zuwara city was cancelled due to security concerns.

The second phase of the initiative was carried out from June to September 2020. It built on the first phase by keeping in contact with former participants as well as inviting other new participants, and to further develop participants’ nonviolent communication, appreciative listening and dialogue skills, which had been identified as a need during the first phase. Course materials were developed and adverts posted on social media, followed by a week-long training on non-violent communication, human security and an intersectional perspective on COVID-19. A further two days of meetings with selected participants supported them to finalise their ideas for future initiatives. The second phase of the initiative was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the course being moved online. Pre-existing problems such as electricity shortages and

internet connectivity issues were also experienced, although these had been foreseen and solutions such as flexibility with time schedules and giving offline assignments were provided. Furthermore, due to TWM's bank account being located in Tunis and it no longer being possible to travel to Tunisia due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the initiative also had to overcome liquidity issues.

### Collaboration

TWM collaborated with two other organisations in the network: Together We Build It and Makers of Hope. Activists from these organisations participated in the rehearsal discussion. Furthermore, TWM worked closely with HSC in the preparation of the training materials used in the second phase.

### Results

The main results perceived by interviewees were changes in knowledge, changed attitudes, the creation of a safe space, as well as increased capacity of the TWM staff involved in implementation.

### Changes in the target group

In particular, all interviewees mentioned that participants increased their knowledge through the sessions, particularly of intersectionality, non-violent communication, attentive listening and human security. Interviewees perceived that some participants inherently understood these concepts, but did not have the **language to describe them**. For others, these were new concepts. In this way, the sessions built a more rounded understanding of these concepts. In particular, the participant who was interviewed mentioned that intersectionality was an entirely new concept to him, which he quickly recognised as very relevant in his own life and experiences.

This **increased knowledge** was seen as also changing the attitudes and capacities of participants, in particular to listen before judging, to communicate effectively and respectfully, acceptance, and to have a

meaningful dialogue without igniting a conflict. This was particularly mentioned by

both TWM staff interviewed, and marked a departure from their experience in the first phase of the initiative where training participants had not been listening to others opinions and only concerned with their own experience. One project staff member also mentioned that the sessions changed women's expectations about people listening to their views and opinions, and getting the attention that they deserve when talking about social, identity and human rights.

*"...the group that we selected in the end was diverse. We had minorities and people from indigenous backgrounds, females and males and different identifies, we had a sense of building community and sharing experiences."*

Co-implementer

*"After the session of gender and intersectionality, we noticed that men went to the female participants to ask them about some aspect of the challenges, women face. Some of these men reported that they did not know of many of the issues women face, although these women were really close to them like mothers and sisters."*

Project Manager

There were few examples of changed attitudes transferring into changed actions, within the space of the initiative, however, one project staff member mentioned that the session on gender and intersectionality was an **eye opener for many men** in the group, who subsequently approached the women to understand about the challenges they face.

All interviewees mentioned that the sessions created a **safe space** for participants to share their experiences, including on issues that are taboo in Libya, such as mental health and sexual identity. Despite the diversity in the

group, participants were seen as having a sense of building community, trust and sharing experiences. The fact that the training was online also meant that it was **accessible to participants who had security concerns**, however there was no perception by either of the project staff that the sessions did anything to concretely improve the security of participants, which is likely due to the limited scope of the initiative in a highly unstable context.

In addition to the above, at the time of writing the online video of Maren's Story had been viewed 31,000 times and can be viewed here: [https://x.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=2403133283286516&id=1627522374180948&anchor\\_composer=false](https://x.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2403133283286516&id=1627522374180948&anchor_composer=false)

*"One of the taboos that we have in Libya is sexual orientation and he was sharing all of this with us because it gave him a sense of a safe space."*

Co-implementer

*"The point that left an impact on me was the issue of "intersectionality" as I wasn't exposed to this content before and through the lens of intersectionality made me look at things from different angles and helped us to accept differences."*

Participant

### Changes in the activists

The activists from TWM also stated that they had benefitted in some ways from the initiative. Both staff mentioned that their capacity had increased, through preparing the materials and **conducting the training**. One mentioned that they had overcome apprehension and **built confidence** in carrying out training, and the other mentioned that participating in the programme overall had benefitted their professional performance. Whilst one staff member noted that the content on attentive listening helped them, the other noted that the content of the initiative did not bring any new perspectives,

but that the main benefit was from building a network as part of a wider programme and increased knowledge from other elements of the programme.

### Success factors

Interviewees identified very diverse factors for the success of the initiative. One common factor mentioned by one of the organisers and the participants was the participants themselves, including Amazigh women as defenders of women's rights and the engagement and active participation of all participants in the sessions. One TWM staff member was particularly satisfied with the **relevance of the topics**, in particular intersectionality and the establishing of common definitions of terms such as human security. They also saw the implementation approach of this phase as a success, where they focused on **small groups** and ensured that participants kept in contact with one another in order to build a network based on trust and a safe space. The participant interviewed additionally found that the implementation was very good, with knowledgeable staff carrying out the sessions, a clear goal and good planning.

### Challenges

The challenges mentioned by interviewees fall into three broad categories: practical challenges, the challenge of social norms in Libya, and the selection of participants, although this final issue was also considered one of the success factors. In particular, the initiative was held in the context of the COVID-19 lockdown with **curfew, power cuts and unstable internet**, which made the online sessions difficult. In addition, it was the first time for TWM to conduct an exclusively online training, therefore staff had a steep learning curve when trying to prepare the sessions to ensure a good quality training. One interviewee mentioned that it would have been preferable to have the sessions in-person, to ensure better communication and to benefit from other external speakers. One staff member of TWM mentioned that social norms in Libya allow the discussion of

communication and human security, but that topics such as gender, identity and sexual orientation are still taboo and can lead to heated discussions, which also presented a challenge. Finally, the participant interviewed mentioned that including more people in the training and ensuring that those invited have existing linkages might have led to more collaborations between participants in the future.

### Sustainability

The perceptions of the sustainability of the initiative by all interviewees were generally

pessimistic. Whilst the initiative formed a close group of participants who continue to remain in contact, which itself is one element of sustainability, without continued funding for future or expanded activities the interviewees **did not expect the initiative to be sustainable**. In particular, since the changes envisaged require long-term thinking, more support was considered necessary to cement this change. Furthermore, the **external context** in Libya was seen as a significant challenge to the sustainability of the initiative, without follow-up activities.

### 3.6 Evaluation question 6 – What examples are there of the initiatives addressing harmful gender norms, values and practices? How did this happen?

This evaluation question is answered through the production of three case studies focused on gender initiatives implemented by partner organisations, and a cross-cutting analysis of the findings from those three case studies. The case studies can be found throughout the report.

Initiatives focusing on gender were supported by Cordaid, who provided capacity building to the Libyan partner organisations to define their projects, guided the partner organisations' management to ensure young people took the lead and had ownership of the initiative, supported defining the project strategy and provided materials and mentoring throughout its implementation. In some cases these initiatives saw young people taking on a leadership position on an initiative in their organisation for the first time.

#### Conclusion

Gender norms, values and practices have been roughly defined in training materials developed by the programme<sup>8</sup>. This defines gender norms as expectations of behaviour, which coincides with definitions of this term in the wider literature<sup>9</sup>. "Practices" is used synonymously with "behaviour" throughout the materials, whilst "gender values" is not explicitly defined but coincides largely with the concept of norms and principles of behaviour. For the purpose of this analysis, we extend these definitions to knowledge, attitudes, and empowerment, as all are closely related concepts. The three initiatives are quite diverse in terms of their focus and results achieved, although all work on women's issues and in their own specific ways aim to address different gender norms, values and practices, in particular those around women's economic empowerment, early marriage and women's rights, and gender-based violence. Based on the in-depth interviews, Fezzan's economic empowerment initiative with their implementation of the rural women's bazaar was the initiative that most frequently and explicitly reported **breaking taboos or challenging norms**, in particular those around women's participation in the workforce. TWM initiative on gender-based violence was also noted, albeit only by one interviewee, to have achieved results on norms. Al Nour's early marriage and women's rights initiative and Fezzan's rural women's bazaar were perceived to have **improved men's expectations of women**, which is a central component of gender norms. Changes in **knowledge** were frequently noted as results of Al Nour's early marriage and women's rights initiative, whilst all three projects were seen as increasing **awareness** of women's issues as well as changing **attitudes** on gender issues. All initiatives were also noted to have contributed to women's **empowerment** in some way.

The initiatives achieved these changes by carrying out **training sessions**, promoting **exchange and debate** on key topics, creating **traditional and online media** materials, such as radio shows and social media posts, providing **opportunities to women to participate** in activities, and ensuring the involvement of men in such activities.

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<sup>8</sup> Training Manual Gender Sensitive Active Non-Violence, December 2020

<sup>9</sup> Cislighi, B. and Heise, L. (2020), Gender norms and social norms: differences, similarities and why they matter in prevention science. *Social Health Illn*, 42: 407-422. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.13008>

### 3.7 Evaluation question 7 – What examples are there of the programme contributing to opportunities for women and men to participate meaningfully and equally in peace processes and in conflict resolution & prevention? How did this happen?

This evaluation question is answered through a review of documentation. The annual reports included descriptions of advocacy moments under the heading ‘Long-term outcome 3: Participation in peace processes and conflict resolution & prevention.’ In addition, as input for the evaluation, Cordaid and HSC listed the advocacy moments carried out since the beginning of the programme and included references to external links and resources. For each advocacy moment, the type of actor involved and the type of outcome was mentioned. This formed the starting point for the analysis of the evaluators.

To create opportunities for Libyan partners to participate in international peace processes, Cordaid and HSC connected Libyan partner staff to various bodies so that they could attend international events, such as NGO working group on Women, Peace and Security at the UN, UN Interagency Working Group on Gender Based Violence, UN security council, OECD Global Forum on Development, the Dutch Embassy in Libya, Greater Middle East Platform, Caritas Internationalis in Geneva, UPR Info, Gender Platform WO=MEN, D66, KUNO and Hague Talks. At times, Cordaid and HSC also went to these events. Cordaid and HSC often supported Libyan partner staff in preparing their speeches, provided the finances for them to travel, and also organised or financially supported them to attend training sessions, such as the training on the workings of the UPR and how to lobby UN member states. Sometimes, opportunities to participate in international events didn’t work out, because of the late arrival of visa, or travel restrictions due to the insecure situation in Libya.

In addition, Cordaid and HSC together with Libyan partners organised expert meetings and online sessions, especially in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the story collection report that includes joint recommendations on inclusive peace building, was launched during an online event. Finally, Cordaid and HSC regularly developed policy briefs and published articles, human interest stories and interviews with Libyan women activists on their websites.

As a result of these efforts, capacities of partners to participate at international level were strengthened. Many occasions occurred whereby an individual, often someone from one of the Libyan partners, went to an event to attend or speak out in front of an audience and as a result gained confidence or knowledge. For example, a young women activist Sarah Mizran showed increased confidence by telling her story to Cordaid and was featured in an article<sup>10</sup> published March 2018, and delivering a speech in 2019 with Hague Talks<sup>11</sup> for which she practiced with a speaking coach. Another example took place in March 2018, whereby youth leaders jointly identified key contributing factors of violent extremism during a training organised by Human Security Collective organised on global counter- terrorism architecture.

Besides strengthened capacity, other **effects on the Libyan partner organisations** or individuals representing those organisations, occurred. These effects were identified by the evaluators as **internal outcomes**, and include **participation outcomes** and **networking outcomes**. At least 11 participation outcomes and 12 networking outcomes were identified.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.cordaid.org/en/news/iwd-sarah-maker-of-hope-in-a-country-at-war>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZsYev7ZW2Y>

A participation outcome is about an invitation issued by the UN or similar body to one of the Libyan partners to participate in an event or take part in a process. For every outcome, it should be clear how the programme contributed to it, although other actors or factors could have played a role as well. For example, in early 2021, the Mission of the European Union to Libya in 2021 invited Cordaid and the Libyan partner network to provide inputs on the priorities for their new Human Rights policy framework. This happened after the launch of the story collection research report<sup>12</sup> on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2020.

A networking outcome is about one (or more) partner organisation(s) having new contacts and starting to collaborate with like-minded organisations, whereby the networking took place at the international level. For example, in October 2018, during the Learning Event for Dutch NAP partners organised by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform, the Libyan and Dutch partners used this networking opportunity to interact with other organizations that do similar work, or that work under similar circumstances and met the newly appointed Dutch Ambassador for Libya. They also informed the Dutch policymakers and international NGO colleagues about the Libyan context, as well as the work that is being done under this programme. Another example is how in March 2019, Tamazight Women Movement initiated a coalition to jointly contribute to the 3rd cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Libya in coordination with Cordaid and HSC. Some members of the coalition were already part of the 'Women and Youth as bridge builders' network, while others were new to the group.

Also **external outcomes** were found by the evaluators, which focus on the **effects on policy makers** from the UN, national government, international institutes, or other bodies, and are referred to as **influencing outcomes**. An influencing outcome describes an effect beyond the span of control of an intervention which is achieved through inspiring and encouraging, facilitating and supporting, or persuading or pressuring whereby a policy maker changed her, his or its behaviour. Change processes at international level can be highly unpredictable and often involve multiple levels, actors and factors. However, the change in the policy maker must be influenced, however partial, indirect, or unintentional it may be, by the programme.

At least 10 influencing outcomes were identified, but this figure may be higher as it cannot be ruled out that additional outcomes took place of which Cordaid and HSC are not aware, which is not uncommon in advocacy work. Sometimes the effects of advocacy moments happen long after the advocacy activity took place, therefore it is possible that more outcomes could still occur in the future.

Examples of influencing outcomes are:

- In January 2018, the head of UNSMIL (Special envoy of the Secretary General to the UN, Ghassan Salame from the MENA region) and member states started to open spaces for women to participate in the peace building process, while previously they were not receptive to opening up spaces for women's participation. This occurred after Hajer Sharief, co-founder of TWBI, gave a speech at the UN Security council about the importance of involvement of civil society, particularly women and youth, in the peacebuilding process.
- Early 2018, the UN Interagency Working Group on Gender Based Violence added the issue of GBV services in Nafusa Mountains as an agenda item in their monthly meetings and asked

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.cordaid.org/en/news/new-research-paper-on-daily-reality-in-libya>

Tamazight Women Movement to conduct a participatory baseline survey on the availability of GBV services, as well as practices in relation to GBV in the areas of Tripoli, Nafusa Mountains and Zuwarah. This happened after Tamazight Women Movement and Together We Build It started attending monthly meetings of the UN Interagency Working Group on Gender Based Violence, after being introduced to this Working Group by Cordaid.

- In June 2019, several policy makers such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and D66 invited Inas Miloud and Zorgh Madi from Tamazight Women Movement to elaborate on the situation in Libya and share some of her personal experiences living in a conflict affected country. This happened after the speech of Inas Miloud at the Cordaid and the Greater Middle East Platform conference on Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support that took place on June 6<sup>th</sup> 2019 in the Netherlands.

### Conclusion

The outcomes show that the programme made serious efforts to provide access to high-level international meetings and events for the Libyan partner organisations. Once at this international stage, partners were able to participate and network and by doing so increase their own capacities. This is especially the case for the two main Libyan partners Tamazight Women Movement and Together We Build It. In some instances, policy makers even took follow-up actions after the lobby actions of the Libyan partners.

Overall, the programme did contribute to opportunities for women and men to participate meaningfully and equally in peace processes through continuous efforts of both HSC and Cordaid together with the Libyan partner organisations to find and make use of opportunities to access international meetings and events focused on conflict resolution and prevention. Cordaid and HSC connected Libyan partner staff to various bodies so that they could attend international events and often supported Libyan partner staff in preparing their speeches, provided the finances for them to travel, and also organised or financially supported them to attend training. They organised expert meetings and online sessions, jointly developed policy briefs and published articles, human interest stories and interviews with Libyan women activists on their websites.

### 3.8 Evaluation question 8 - To what extent has the project helped to generate outcomes in such a way that they are likely to last after the end of the project?

This question is answered by analysing the results of the questions of the story inquiry that relate to sustainability and by reviewing the case studies.

#### Plans for after the programme

First, respondents were asked which of the following options below best described their plans for after the programme ends (Figure 16). The assumption is that the more concrete the plans are for continuing work as a bridge builder after the programme ends, the higher the likelihood that this work will continue and the more sustainable the programme will be. Following this question, respondents were given the opportunity to elaborate on their answer.

A total of 13 respondents indicate that they do have specific ideas on how they will continue their work as a bridge builder. Some respondents explained their plans.

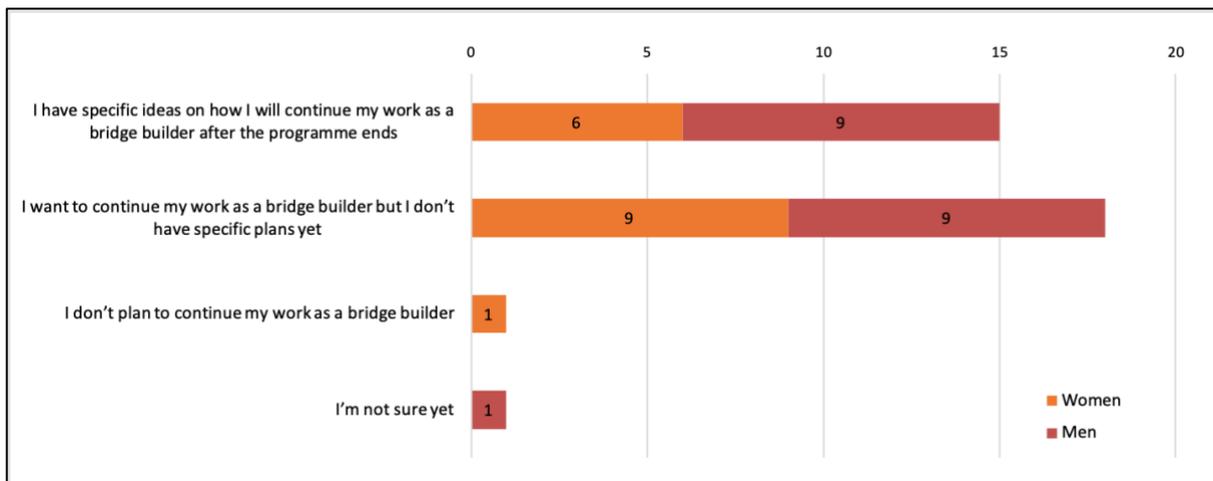


Figure 16. Plans for after the programme ends, by gender

*“After the end of the program, I will continue to work as a bridge-builder for the benefit of society and in all that it might need such as awareness raising, and other programs that may support youth and women, with the cooperation of our organization and other inside and outside Sebha, and also jointly with the municipal council and State institutions in order to lobby and advocate for citizens’ various concerns.”* Female, Al Nour

*“I really aim to draw further steps in the project of Bazaar for women in rural areas. We can build on this.”* Male, Fezzan Libya Group

*“I am aiming to do more workshops, so that we can help women to transcend their conditions and become more and more aware of their leadership abilities. It will really be about the ability of women and their strength and position in the society.”* Male, Goodness has Brought us Together

*“We are continuing our work in different trajectories and with other organizations, with youth, women and different groups. We have a project with the Arab reform and we will finalize another project with the German embassy. Many other projects related to making women visible. We are working on promoting women's role and presence in politics, public sphere and other issues.”* Female, Together We Build It

*“I would like to hold a project that can be in the middle of the city and then the youth can join from different contexts and start to talk, do activities and talk about their differences and what is common between them.”* Male, Al Nour

Most respondents (18 out of 35) indicate that they intend to continue their work as bridge builders, but that **they don't have specific plans yet**. Nonetheless, in some of these cases the respondents had general ideas that required further elaboration, for instance for new initiatives, or for replications of initiatives that were implemented as part of the programme, for instance the story collection. Even amongst those who did not have concrete plans, respondents were generally full of ambition to continue contributing to improving the lives of women, youth and society.

*“I am thinking of an activity that addresses fears among the youth, as this is one of the weak points they have. And to eliminate fears between regions.”* Male, Fezzan Libya Group

*I think I would like to work more on story collection because it can tell you so much about the current situation and creating more of it can provide fixed and sustainable information and a platform to help people to refer to. Out of these stories, we can write something and create a space that can last and help other people. It might take a lot of time but one of the things we can do is to create a better developed program to gather this information and ideas."*

Female, Tamazight Women Movement

*"My idea would be to continue working on the gender norms and to fortify the gender legal support and to work on reforming laws that impact women's lives and to support women particularly in front of violence and supporting it and training through awareness and social activities."* Male, Makers of Hope

Respondents mention several limiting factors that stand in the way of them continuing their work as bridge builders, such as the **security situation in Libya**, for instance:

*"The most important thing for us was the awareness we raised. The next step is how to have more influence on the ground and in reality. The main problem is the burden we have in Sebha (Southern Libya). We noticed in some of the sessions we had in Doubari that there is a form of responsiveness concerning the topic of security whenever there is an inclusion of women in the discussions and whenever we discuss with women what their role can be. We are trying to do the same in Sebha especially that the security context is more complicated. In light of this, we will try to have more projects related to women and security in the city."*

Male, Fezzan Libya Group

Some respondents changed location or organisation, or are still in the planning phase within their current organisation, such as the following respondent:

*"I am leaving the city where I live now and this will definitely affect my entire involvement in the social work that I usually do and I am not sure what my next step will be."* Male, I am Libyan, but my Child is Not

Even though the reasons for leaving the city and the personal situation of this respondent is unknown, the country presents a complex displacement scenario,<sup>13</sup> which might complicate the continuation of the work of some respondents.

Respondents also mentioned the influence of the **coronavirus pandemic** as an obstructing factor to continue activities. Some respondents currently focus their energy on dealing with the effects of the pandemic or mentioned that they will wait until the pandemic ends to start activities.

*"We have a lot of ideas but we need to get some funding to work on them later on and develop these ideas. We need to wait for the end of the pandemic. We have an exhibition that we planned for previously."* As her response to the open question at the end of the inquiry, this same respondent says: *"It would be great to touch base again when COVID-19 is over to follow-up on upcoming ideas and the impact and consequences of what was already done."* Female, Al Nour

*"We think that we will have more effective workshops on the level of women, youth and human security. Like we are planning to do more planning, conferences and events and*

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/libya.html>

*forums that can be held yearly to bring the stakeholders and bring them to discuss more issues or issues more in depth with a high-level perspective. We are planning to do this once COVID is over. We are planning to have more youth engaged in gender, human security issues.”* Male, Makers of Hope

*“I really want to continue what I was doing as a bridge builder, but because of the pandemic, and the fast political changes that are happening now in Libya, and with all the uncertainty we live in, I do not have a specific plan for what to do now. I know what I can do, and how to do it, but I don't have a timetable for any plans in the near future. One reason is that here in Ghat we just had a new municipal council, and there are so many things happening right now locally and nationally that make it difficult to set a time and a plan.”* Male, organisation withheld

### **Any other topics that were mentioned**

The responses from the open question regarding whether there is anything else respondents would like to share with the evaluators provided further insights into the sustainability of the project.

Some respondents mentioned **points for improvement**. For instance, more in-depth focus has been suggested to address relations with operational actors such as government, municipalities and other institutions. Contextualization of the project is also desired, such as having trainers from the region itself instead of the Netherlands and more contextualised content to make it applicable to Libya and the region overall. Several respondents mention the need for further financial support to ensure that activities could continue.

*“The project was successful over the past year but we need to develop it more and to enter into the deeper stages to address the relationship with the government itself, like municipalities and other institutions. This will require support especially after the end of COVID-19.”* Male, Fezzan Libya

*“I would recommend that they refer to more content and more information. Trainers to be from Libya or from countries that already have an experience in war and conflict. Because most of the training was by people who were from the Netherlands and I think it is important to have people from Libya, Tunisia, Syria, Yemen or places that have common features with the Libyan context.”* Female, Tamazight Women Movement

Most respondents made a **call for continued support**, communication and continuation of the programme. For instance, some respondents would like to continue to benefit from the Dutch partners’ knowledge on the topics. They wish to continue training and skill development and to open it up to a bigger group so more people can benefit, as well as to stay in connection to the initiative to be able to help local communities. This might indicate a slight dependability upon the project and its organisers and a need for more capacity strengthening.

*“I would like to invite them to continue communication with us even after the end of the interventions. We are not only seeking financial support. However, we are also seeking support that is related to knowledge and I would appreciate more continuity.”* Male, Goodness Has Brought Us Together

*“[...] Maybe the financial support should increase a little bit for the Libyan alliances and increase a little bit the safety of members by training them on how to be safer while dealing with these subjects.”* Male, Makers of Hope

### Sustainability of initiatives

With regards to the sustainability of initiatives, as perceived by project staff and some initiative participants interviewed for the case studies, all but one of the six initiatives mentioned some form of replication of their initiative, by other organisations or groups, and in one case the initiative was seen as having a catalyst effect. Furthermore, three of the initiatives mentioned plans to continue with the initiative in some form, and two mentioned that it gave them new ideas for other initiatives, which are also strong indicators of sustainability. Nonetheless, interviewees of three of the initiatives also gave a negative assessment of the sustainability of the initiative, and three of the initiatives also explicitly stated that they required continued support in order to continue.

*“After the implementation of the project, we still have results that last until today. Students formed groups to increase awareness about the use of drugs in the region and we are very proud of this.”* Male, I am Libyan

*“Even when we had meetings that included brainstorming for participants, we were aware that the main concept of awareness needs years to be built. A positive impact in conditions like the ones in Libya cannot last.”* Male, Tamazight Women Movement

### Conclusion

The programme has made a profound impact on individual participants, as well as on the participating Libyan civil society organisations, which are likely to last after the programme ends. Participants clearly enhanced their skills and knowledge and were exposed to international and other networks. Several respondents indicate they have clear plans on how they and their organisation will be able to continue. Many others had fewer clear plans but maintained a great desire to continue. Some respondents call for continued support from the Dutch consortium partners in terms of knowledge exchange, communications, financial support.

Likewise, there were several indicators of sustainability to be found in the initiatives, with examples of replication of their work, plans for continuation, and new ideas. Yet lack of funding and support presents a large challenge to the sustainability of the small-scale initiatives that have been implemented. It should also be noted that the initiatives were implemented with a budget of 5000 EUR for most organisations, due to issues with transferring funds and the quality of the proposals, whilst aiming ambitiously to contribute to changes in complex social issues such as social norms, human security, and gender relations. Whilst the initiatives undeniably achieved many results with limited resources, expectations of how sustainable such results will be should be adjusted in line with the scope of these initiatives.

Finally, whilst there exists a strong appetite and motivation to continue their work as bridge builders, the extent to which activists will be able to continue their work is uncertain, due to various reasons such as the pandemic, limited financial means and continued insecurity.

### 3.9 How did insights from the MTR, and possibly lessons from other learning opportunities, lead to changes to the interventions, if at all?

This evaluation question is answered through document review. Especially the sections on lessons learned in the annual reports were consulted, which contained detailed information on how the programme adapted according to the circumstances.

During the inception phase, the programme has made some modifications to its **Theory of Change**. The first objective was slightly reformulated and no longer focussed specifically on conflict-related gender based violence as such due to the sensitivity of the topic. Rather, it was now formulated as human security with specific attention for women's safety. This left ample room for the participants to indicate the priorities based on their interaction with the community through the story collection research. Also, the list of assumptions was reduced and more aligned with the Theory of Change and the cause-effect relations between outputs and outcomes. Throughout the rest of the programme, the Theory of Change remained unchanged.

The **mid-term evaluation** came out in December 2018 and covered the period from early 2017 to October 2018. The consortium partners indicated to take note of some of the recommendations that were made, such as an apparent difference in participants' levels of understanding of the concept of gender and the suggestion to organise another workshop on gender and gender-sensitive programming; the suggestion to give more attention to the value of lobby and advocacy activities and skills in order to achieve the outcomes in the lobby and advocacy branch of the Theory of Change; and the remark that it was uncertain if all participants in the programme were aware of the different branches of the ToC as part of the same programme and the suggestion to make this cohesion clearer. These three points were subsequently addressed by the programme: in February 2019 a three-day workshop on SGBV was organised, including a recap on the topics and exchanges on the initiatives; more attention was paid to lobby and advocacy, with all partners invited to meet with the Dutch parliamentarians; finally, in the following trainings, the Theory of Change was repeatedly explained and its coherence discussed.

Other learning moments in the programme revealed an ambition amongst training participants to practice and pass on their new skills to others by conducting training themselves. As a result, **two new outputs were included in the project extension** for 2020 covering a training of trainers session to recap on training sessions that had already been conducted and prepare the participants to pass on this new knowledge and conduct their own sessions with others.

Due to constraints in core funding, the beginning of 2018 marked the unfortunate end of the Women Peacemakers Program (WPP), who was involved in the programme as the third consortium partner. As a result, from January 2018 onwards, **Cordaid took over WPP's activities** in the program that largely contribute to the second pillar on 'harmful underlying gender norms', showing a high level of flexibility.

Furthermore, the programme has continuously made adaptations throughout its 4 years, as the ever-changing security situation in Libya on the ground remained of great concern. Already in 2017, it became increasingly **difficult for women to travel** (internationally, but also locally) and this remained the case for the remainder of the programme. In 2017, the programme noticed that several partner organizations sent male rather than female representatives to the trainings offered in Tunisia. Even though the high rate of male trainees gave the training facilitators the opportunity to actively work with Libyan men on the topic of how to be a male ally for women's empowerment, it also meant that fewer women activists from Libya had the chance to attend the trainings. To mitigate this risk, the programme then agreed to occasionally accept mahrams<sup>14</sup>, but only after careful consideration in cases where no other options were available for women to attend.

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<sup>14</sup> In Islam, a mahram is a member of one's family with whom, if he is an adult male, a woman may be escorted during a journey.

## Case study – Violence Outside the Battlefields – a Gender Initiative implemented by Tamazight Women Movement

**This case study describes the gender initiative “Violence Outside the Battlefields” implemented by Tamazight Women Movement (TWM), a civil society organisation based in Tripoli, as part of the Women and Youth as bridge builders programme. It is based on a review of programme documentation and interviews with two project staff involved in designing and implementing the initiative. This initiative contributed to the gender theme of the programme, with TWM trained and accompanied by Cordaid.**

### The initiative

The “Violence Outside the Battlefields” initiative strived to highlight gender based violence at a time when the main focus of Libyans has been on the violence of war. The initiative aimed to increase awareness of gender based violence and increase engagement of civil society organisations on this issue. Its strategy focused on art as a starting point for discussions about violence, with a call for submissions for artwork on people’s perceptions and impressions of violence. A selection of artists was made and they were invited to create art pieces aimed at starting a discussion on gender based violence. Finally, an art exhibition featuring the most relevant works was held. Whilst the initiative was originally intended to be held offline, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing armed conflict in and around Tripoli it was brought online and a virtual gallery created to display the artworks, with an accompanying online campaign around the topic of gender based violence.

### Collaboration

TWM collaborated with Youth Hub, a cultural hub for art and youth. This organisation helped with outreach, identifying artists and

generating interest for participating in the initiative. They also curated the art pieces for the exhibition.

### Results

The main results perceived by interviewees were changes in awareness, including amongst men, of gender based violence issues behaviour and sharing of experiences by women online in comments. Interestingly, the initiative also received backlash from some segments of the population, and this was also seen as a result as it led to increased interaction and discussion.

### Changes in the target group

Project staff found it difficult to assess the extent to which the initiative had led to changes in the target group, due to a lack of data on the attitudes of people reached by the initiative before and after the implementation of activities. Nonetheless, there were a number of indications that the initiative succeeded in contributing to raised awareness of the issue of different forms of gender based violence, by **inciting debate online** with the participation of both men and women. Project staff mentioned that the initiative received a level of **backlash** from certain population groups, who denied that certain forms of gender based violence were an issue in Libya and accused the initiative of promoting western values. At the same time, women actively **shared their own experiences** online which served both as the source of inspiration for the artwork that was produced, as well as confirmation of women's perspectives of the issue of gender based violence. One project staff mentioned that the initiative contributed to wider efforts to raise awareness of GBV through the 16 days of activism, which overall had helped shift the media discourse from an exclusive focus on the violence of war, to the everyday violence that is experienced by women in Libya.

### Changes in the activists

One of the project staff credited their involvement in the initiative with reinforcing her **motivation** to work on such issues. The initiative made her reflect on wanting to change in her personal life as well as on the professional level, and to dig deeper and **speak up more often** about stigma.

### Success factors

The use of **art** as a medium through which to talk about gender based violence was seen as one factor for the success of the initiative by one project staff. In particular, art was seen as a way to express issues of gender based violence that are otherwise difficult to bring up in the public sphere and it was also seen as a way to create the feeling of a personal conversation about the issue with viewers. One interviewee mentioned the fact that the initiative emphasised **solidarity** also made it a success, indicating to people that there are organisations working on such initiatives and that they are not alone. Finally, linking the initiative with the **16 Days of Activism** against Gender-Based Violence, an international campaign that kicks off annually on 25 November, was also seen as a success factor by one interviewee, as there were many organisations at that time working on gender based violence issues and this was seen as helping to divert much of the backlash. The fact that this built on the past seven years of the 16 Days of Activism in Libya was also seen as a success factor, as this had laid the groundwork and prepared society more to accept such a discussion.

### Challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a particular challenge, forcing the initiative to be brought online. **Security** was also an issue, as the art scene in Tripoli was targeted by conservative elements in society and engaging with the topic of gender based violence in public was risky. At the same time the COVID-19 pandemic also presented an

opportunity, as it meant that prior safety concerns about holding the art exhibition in a physical location were no longer pressing. Furthermore, interviewees felt that the COVID-19 lockdown created **more appetite to engage in online events** such as the gallery and the online discussion, as many activities had been pushed online by this point.

*“For example, one of the elements was about travelling – we tried to use the social norms that ban travel as a form of violence. This was also sensitive and it fired back at us [...] for us it meant that we were able to hit a nerve and there were people who supported us.”*

Project Manager 1

*“It is trying to speak up for the women I know that motivated me to do more.”*

Project manager 2

*“All these campaigns and the collective work from more than one side is definitely leaving an impact.”*

Project manager 2

### Sustainability

One interviewee was sceptical about the sustainability of the initiative, due to its small scale and the pervasive issue of GBV in Libyan society. At the same time both interviewees felt that the initiative had **sparked a conversation** and that other organisations had been inspired by their work, that would encourage further projects on this same topic. Finally, in linking GBV to the theme of human security the initiative aimed to keep the conversation going from more than one angle, which was also perceived by the interviewee as a positive sign for the sustainability of the initiative.

prepare and plan trainings and find solutions for challenges such as travel restrictions and the transfer of funds. Also, the continuous feedback from participants on the content of the workshops, as well as the insights from the MTR, lead to changes to the interventions.

## 5. Conclusions

### **More knowledge, changed attitudes, and a strong feeling of oneself as a bridge builder**

The programme has had a profound impact on the activists' view on themselves as bridge builders and there are many indications that this has been due to their participation in the programme. The programme helped to change their attitudes and beliefs with regards to gender and their own rights in a positive way, and this was particularly the case for male participants who changed their views on women. Activists also feel more knowledgeable on the topics of Human Security and Gender Sensitive Active Non-Violence and show determination to continue to strive for a more just and peaceful society. Through storytelling they shared how they influenced others through the local initiatives that were implemented as part of the programme in their physical and online communities. In most cases they challenged current gender norms; some mentioned working on human security issues and others specifically described the effects on youth. This suggests that the programme's strategy to empower CSOs and activists and support some of them in implementing local initiatives has borne fruit both for the activists themselves, as well as indirectly for their physical and online communities. Also, it suggests that the programme has applied an integrated and cross-cutting gender sensitive approach that has been successful.

These findings are all the more impressive when seen in the context of Libya, where the security situation is fragile and the population is living in extremely challenging conditions. The activists indicated that their security situation stayed the same or even worsened since the beginning of the programme, which is a deterioration compared to the midterm evaluation. However, they felt equally influential in the stories they shared, compared to the midterm evaluation, indicating that the programme continued to have a positive effect on their feeling of being influential.

Especially their participation in workshops provided valuable moments for capacity building and networking. However, even though half of the respondents stated that the programme responded to their needs in their role as bridge builder a lot, another group rated the programme's relevance as somewhat neutral although still on the positive side. The evaluators have not found an explanation as to why a group of respondents was only moderately positive about the programme responding to their needs. We can only guess that the circumstances they live in call for more action, funds and peacebuilding and that it is in that sense never enough.

### **A strengthened CSO network and a "family" of activists**

Civil society is an essential building block of development and national cohesion. In a fragile and conflict-ridden country, it plays an essential important role in defending citizen rights and working to change and uphold social norms and behaviours. Today, only 3.4% of the world's population lives in countries with open civic space, while in most countries civic space is narrowed, obstructed, repressed or even closed.<sup>15</sup> Libya is amongst the countries that are considered closed, making it all the more important to support the existing fragile and young civil society.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://monitor.civicus.org/quickfacts>

The programme tried to build or strengthen the connections between the participating CSOs and activists affiliated with those CSOs. Cordaid, HSC and the two main Libyan partners, TWM and TWBI invested multiple efforts to build the network, including coalition building workshops, mediation between partners, joint capacity building sessions and joint activities. This evaluation found that the programme has faced many challenges in their attempts to build a coherent network. The geographic spread of the network meant that it is very diverse, which brings both challenges in terms of discord between partners, as well as opportunities to overcome differences, understand other viewpoints and contexts and gain support. Regardless of these challenges, the social network analysis showed that the network has been notably strengthened over the course of the programme. There are more connections between the CSOs and the connections are also stronger. The networking element of the programme is also widely perceived and appreciated by the Libyan partners, with some choosing to describe the network as a “family”. The diversity of the network that with it brought so many challenges is mentioned by many Libyan partner respondents as its strength. This programme therefore contributed in a meaningful way to a strengthened civil society in Libya despite a challenging context.

### **Small-scale but clear contributions to human security and gender issues in communities**

The approach of the programme was to strengthen capacities of activists to conduct research through story collection on the daily safety in the community and to use these stories to feed into the development of initiatives. This evaluation found that the stories collected indeed fed into the development and implementation of initiatives that aimed to increase human security and/or decrease harmful gender norms at the local and national level. In this way the stories built on the capacity building provided on Human Security and Gender Sensitive Active Non-Violence.

The three case studies of initiatives focused on Human Security showed that the initiatives recorded a wide range of results which could potentially contribute to improved human security. Outcomes include building a community of diverse participants or increasing engagement or networking between different groups, increasing the capacities of participants and/or of implementing staff, and changing people’s attitudes. Some initiatives were seen as creating safe spaces for people to discuss and exchange. Especially for the human security initiatives a key result was the activists’ own increased understanding of the concept, which allowed them to reframe their work and communicate it to others.

The three case studies of initiatives focused on gender are quite diverse in terms of their focus and results achieved, although all work on women’s issues and in their own specific ways and aim to address gender norms, values and practices, in particular those around women’s economic empowerment, early marriage and women’s rights, and gender-based violence. Results include breaking taboos or challenging norms, in particular those around women’s participation in the workforce, improved men’s expectations of women, changes in knowledge and increased awareness of women’s issues as well as changing attitudes on gender issues. All initiatives were also noted to have contributed to women’s empowerment in some way.

### **Inspiration and increased exposure for international lobby and advocacy**

The programme aimed to promote the participation of women in national and international political processes, while guarding and increasing the safety and space for civil society organisations to participate. The evaluation found that Cordaid and HSC on many occasions connected Libyan partner staff to various bodies so that they could attend international events and often supported Libyan partner staff in preparing their speeches, provided the finances for them to travel, and also organised or financially supported them to attend training. They also organised expert meetings and

online sessions, jointly developed policy briefs and published articles, human interest stories and interviews with Libyan women activists on their websites.

Once at this international stage, partners were able to participate and network with a wide range of organisations, and by doing so increased their own capacities. This is especially the case for the two main Libyan partners Tamazight Women Movement and Together We Build It. In some instances, policy makers even took follow-up actions after the lobby actions of the Libyan partners.

### **Increased skills and a strong appetite to continue, despite a lack of continued funding and support**

As stated, the programme has made an impact on the participating activists, as well as on the participating Libyan civil society organisations they are affiliated with. Activists clearly enhanced their skills and knowledge and were exposed to international and other networks. Several respondents indicate they have clear plans on how they and their organisation will be able to continue. Many others had fewer clear plans but maintained a great desire to continue. Some respondents call for continued support from the Dutch consortium partners in terms of knowledge exchange, communications, financial support.

Likewise, there were several indicators of sustainability to be found in the initiatives, with examples of replication of their work, plans for continuation, and new ideas. Yet lack of funding and support presents a large challenge to the sustainability of the small-scale initiatives that have been implemented. It should also be noted that the initiatives were implemented with a budget of 5000 EUR, taking into account constraints with transferring funds, the quality of proposals and insecurity, whilst aiming ambitiously to contribute to changes in complex social issues such as social norms, human security, and gender relations. Whilst the initiatives undeniably achieved many results with limited resources, expectations of how sustainable such results will be should be adjusted in line with the scope of these initiatives.

Finally, whilst there exists a strong appetite and motivation to continue their work as bridge builders, the extent to which activists will be able to continue their work is uncertain, due to various reasons such as the pandemic, limited financial means and continued insecurity.

### **Perseverance and adaptation in a complex and dangerous context**

It can be concluded that the programme showed a high level of adaptability and demonstrated great perseverance under difficult circumstances due to the ever-changing security situation in Libya. The fact that the programme did not end prematurely due to outbreaks of violence and local initiatives were developed, funded and implemented, has been a great success in and of itself.

The consortium partners have been very resourceful in finding solutions to ensure the continuity of the programme. They've continuously consulted with the lead partners in Libya, TWM and TWBI, to prepare and plan trainings and find solutions for challenges such as travel restrictions and the transfer of funds. Also, the continuous feedback from participants on the content of the workshops, as well as the insights from the MTR, lead to some changes to the interventions.

## 6. Recommendations

This final section includes some recommendations from the evaluators. As the programme has ended, these recommendations apply to any future programmes that address similar topics and operate under similar circumstances.

### **Make cross-cutting gender sensitive approaches more explicit**

The evaluation findings suggest that the programme has applied an integrated and cross-cutting gender sensitive approach and that it has been successful. This is demonstrated by the increased knowledge of the participating activists, the more prominent and respected role of women in the strengthened CSO network, and the local activities implemented that focus on challenging gender norms. It was ingrained throughout all actions of the programme, such as considering women's safety to travel to workshops, giving equal space for men and women to participate, and listen to the advice of the local resource persons in deciding what adjustments to make to ensure equal participation. For example, ample time was made available during workshops to create a safe space for men and women to express their feelings. However, it has not found much emphasis on this approach during the desk research, for instance a description of the different elements of the gender-sensitive approach that are applied in the different pillars of the programme, or related indicators or targets. The evaluators would recommend making this cross-cutting gender sensitive approach to programme implementation more explicit and emphasize it as a unique feature of the programme.

### **Reflect the diverse approaches to working on civic space in countries where it is closed or threatened**

In situations of closed civic space, working on strengthening civil society is a bold endeavour. The evaluators noticed that this element of the programme is under-exposed, particularly in programme documentation. Whilst it is often touched upon during the context updates that were included in the programme's annual reports, it is not very well elaborated as part of the vision of the programme. The evaluators recommend future programmes to highlight and elaborate further on the challenges of working in closed civic space, carry out a civic space analysis specific to the context that can feed into concrete programme strategies, describe the specific strategies employed by the programme to work within a closed space, as well as the strategies planned to attempt to open space for civil society in a conflict-affected and insecure country such as Libya. These elements should also be integrated prominently in the Theory of Change.

### **In particular, ensure the importance and the specificities of the CSO networking approach features prominently in the theory of change**

One strategy that was particularly effective in this programme and that can also contribute to work on civic space was the strengthening network of civil society organisations. In particular, the programme went beyond the scope of other programmes with CSO networking elements to bring together organisations who represented diametrically opposing views and positions on the conflict in Libya, and invested time and resources in mediating between such different partners and bringing them together in a network. Whilst it has a place in the programme's Theory of Change<sup>16</sup>, the emphasis on this element is small and does not do justice to the effects the programme has achieved. It is the strengthened network amongst activists, the connections between them and the changed perceptions that they have undergone through exchanging with people in different regions that will likely persist beyond the lifespan of this programme. The evaluators encourage such

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<sup>16</sup> Intermediate outcome 3.2

programmes to explicitly feature this element in their theory of change in order for the effects to be specifically monitored.

**Recognise the personal toll of conflict and instability on activists; provide outlets, support and adjust programming accordingly**

The protracted conflict in Libya continues to have an intense effect on the physical and mental well-being of activists. Whilst participating in such programmes can be a form of release, empowerment and positive focus it can also increase the pressure on them, risk of burnout, their exposure to backlash or criticism, and to physical danger. It was clear from reports and discussions with programme staff that the programme management remained sensitive to such challenges, and took steps to adapt the programme where possible. They also forged connections with activists on a more personal level that allowed them to understand and share the challenges that they faced. Empathy, flexibility and support are intangible factors in the successful implementation of this programme that we recommend be recognised and explicitly included in future programmes.

## 7. Annexes

Annex 1: Evaluation matrix

Annex 2: Sprockler stories and responses to open questions

Annex 3: Sprockler inquiry and social network questionnaire