



Preserving Peace in Chad: Early Warning and Early Response

Project Brief, December 2017

Background

After decades of political instability, state failure, civil wars, and resulting conflict over the control of state resources and political power, a condition of relative stability has returned to Chad in recent years. Nonetheless, the situation remains fragile.

The country is faced with numerous internal and external challenges of a political, social and security-related nature. Conflicts along the Chadian borders – most notably in the Central African Republic (CAR), Mali, Sudan, South Sudan, Nigeria and Cameroon – weapons proliferation, and the presence of nebulous terrorist groupings such as Boko Haram in the area of Lake Chad, take their toll on Chad’s multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, which could result in social tensions and inter-community conflict.

While cohabitation among, and between, the over 200 ethnic groups, as well as the different Christian (about 34%), and Muslim (about 54%), denominations is largely peaceful, relations remain strained and latent tensions continue to exist, also in the capital of N’Djaména. As such, there is a risk that daily socioeconomic issues may be transformed into violent conflict along religious and ethnic divisions, threatening intercommunal peace and compromising the country’s fragile stability.



Five day training, September 2014

It is in this context that the Chadian Community Centre Al Mouna (CAM) in N’Djaména, and the Human Security Division (HSD) of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), launched the “Early Warning and Early Response” project in 2014. The initiative is supported by the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich and the Cordoba Foundation of Geneva (CFG).

Objectives & Approach

The goal of the project is to support the CAM in establishing a community-based Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) mechanism for the timely recognition of, and rapid response to, potential intra- and inter-religious and ethnic conflicts. The project seeks to strengthen the social fabric of the rich Chadian society, increase its resilience to possible escalatory dynamics, and thereby facilitate the peaceful cohabitation among and between the communities.

By establishing the community-based EWER mechanism, the project brings together leaders, youth and people from the local communities across intra- and inter-religious and -ethnic divisions. By working collaboratively on developing a conflict resolution mechanism that is inclusive, representative, consensus- and community-based, participants experience first-hand how to work across religious and ethnic differences to reach mutually acceptable solutions and prevent future conflicts. These experiences provide the participants with the necessary skills to facilitate peaceful cohabitation and resolve conflict without the use of violence.

The initiative provides thirty youth monitors (aged between 20 and 40) with relevant training in conflict analysis and transformation, thereby promoting the recognition of potentially escalatory trends and their effective management. By supporting the youth to become an integral part of the EWER system, they are empowered and can attain the means to act in a capacity for peace.



Five day workshop, 2014: brainstorming and training

Activities

The first two-day training session was held in 2014 and introduced more than 100 Christian and Muslim youths from N'Djaména to the topic of conflict transformation. In a second five-day training, 40 participants from the previous course had the opportunity to deepen their understanding of conflict transformation, and were provided with an overview of EWER mechanisms.

The CAM subsequently requested further training in 2016 for the purpose of setting up an EWER mechanism in five selected pilot quarters in the capital. This third training module convened the 30 monitors and provided them with the knowledge and skills regarding how to establish this EWER mechanism. A consecutive conference invited more than 30 leaders from the pilot quarters, thus deepening the contact between the leaders and the youth. The activities introduce participants to the idea of establishing an EWER system, and create the foundation for the emergence of a safe and constructive mediation space.

Outcomes

The project has successfully established and maintained a group of monitors in five pilot quarters of N'Djaména. These individuals have received initial training on conflict transformation and the process of establishing such a mechanism. They have also been informed on how EWER systems function, the different roles and responsibilities involved, as well as the challenges tied to the concepts of inclusivity, representativeness, and community- and consensus-based decision-making.

The initiative has also managed to conduct initial outreach to a variety of block-, quarter- and district leaders, as well as religious and ethnic leaders. The project continues in its efforts to create an EWER mechanism in the capital, prevent intra- and inter-religious and ethnic violence, and facilitate peaceful cohabitation between and among different communities in Chad.

Further Information

<http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/foreign-policy/human-rights/peace/religion-and-conflicts.html>

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