

Working Paper

9TH CEMOFPSC CONFERENCE

The “ARAB SPRING”: The Post 2015 Agenda and Spanish Cooperation for Development

Pontifical Institute Notre Dame of Jerusalem Center
Jerusalem, February 12 and 13, 2014

Introduction

FPSC - *Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura* - www.fundacionfpsc.org that works in the field of development cooperation was founded more than 25 years ago with the clear goal of helping people and social groups with poor resources. Today FPSC is working in 41 countries in 4 continents, but since its foundation it has been paying particular attention to the Mediterranean region, and especially the Middle East. In fact, FPSC has been developing in this area of the world more than 198 projects in partnership with more than 50 local organisations, mainly NGOs. FPSC started working in the Palestinian Territories in 1994 and it has been implementing since then 54 interventions in priority sectors such as education, water resources, and construction/restoration of houses and supporting the creation of employment.

The difficulty of working in the cooperation field in the Middle East is not a consequence of poverty, but of the fact that it is the most belligerent region of the world. War is part of every day life. Poverty is not the only trigger of the conflicts, like it happens in other regions. The HDI of the countries involved does not show an absolute poverty rate, although it does show a huge economic inequality. The bigger obstacle for their development is the instability of the area. The circumstances of ongoing conflicts, and what is worse, the loss of hope for a solution, have been engendering for years an endless spiral of division, destruction, death, violence, hatred and intolerance. Within a few kilometers the most complex conflicts in modern history are concentrated: the Arab-Israeli conflict, Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Lebanon, Iraq, the potential threat of Iran and, more recently, the new and dangerous situation created after the Arab Spring.. Nowadays, one of the focuses of international attention is the phenomenon of displacement of millions of Syrians by the countries of the region, fleeing serious armed conflict in his country.

FPSC and their local partners in the Middle East are aware of all the problems originated by the unstable, and often dangerous situation in the region, as well as of the lack of a close relation between the important international experts and local people who live the everyday life in that part of the world. This is why in 2007 FPSC decided to create the CEMOFPSC – Centre of Middle Eastern Studies, www.cemofpsc.org, a multidisciplinary think tank whose purpose is to get together experts from all tendencies, nationalities, professions and religions to debate on different aspects of the Middle East reality.

The mission of the CEMOFPSC is to “educate and inform” everyone who is working in the Middle East for the human and integral development, for the peace and for the respect of the human rights. To fulfil its mission, CEMOFPSC have a multidisciplinary network of experts on the ground. Among their objectives there is the task of raising the consciousness of Madrid inhabitants, Spanish and international people,

regarding the problems and the challenges of the region, mainly in the fields of basic rights, democracy and peace, with the cooperation work as a factor of development and peace construction.

In the particular context of what we know as the “Arab Spring”, FPSC started at the beginning of 2011 a series of seminars and meetings that took place in Madrid and Rome, with the purpose of analysing, step by step, this process considering the different sides of the issue and raising awareness of the state of affairs in several Arab states, in the presence of various Spanish and foreign experts, Many Spanish and International experts had been direct witnesses and actors of the events. During these sessions, we considered also the challenges that this situation is raising on some aspects of development, such as: the quality of the education, the access to the water resources and the rights of disabled people, all of this with an important coverage in the national media.

The objective of this 9th seminar of CEMOFPS is to identify the opportunities and challenges that the Arab Spring is representing to the Official Aid for Development, both Spanish and International. It is important to bare in mind that the United Nations are carrying out consultations to shape the post 2015 agenda of the Millennium Goals with the support of civil society. In the frame of these consultations, this seminar is particularly relevant and pertinent and its conclusions can have a global impact. The 11 topics of discussion will be the following: Inequalities, Governance, Growth and Employment, Health, Education, Environmental Sustainability, Food Security and Nutrition, Conflict and Fragility, Dynamics of the Population, Energy and Water. These topics will be treated without losing sight of the specific characteristics of the region subject of this study, with presence of religious, social, cultural and ethnic minorities that shall be entitled of the rights and duties that belong to any human being.

Center for Middle Eastern Studies of the Foundation for Social Promotion of Culture
Madrid, 3rd October 2013

Structure and organization of the conference theme:

The seminar will be composed of five sessions, distributed during two days.

The first, second and third sessions, that will take place the first day, will consist of a conference and two round tables about the opportunities and threats that the Arab Spring represents for the International Cooperation for development in the Middle East.

The opening conference will try to trace the convergence and divergence lines between the Post 2015 agenda, the Spanish cooperation in the Middle East and the social and political movement known as the Arab Spring. Two debate sessions, in the form of round tables, will follow. Experts from the North and South of the Mediterranean will try to deepen the lines previously defined by the speaker of the opening conference.

The first round table will focus on the democratic governance in the Arab society, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals of the post 2015 agenda and the tools, the means and the guidance of the official help for development. Meanwhile the second round table will concentrate on Israel and the Palestinian Territories with the purpose of outlining which tools and resources of the Spanish Cooperation should be promoted for a peace resolution in this problematical fraction of the Middle East geography.

Day two of the seminar will be more practical and participative. During the first round table of the day, four “success stories” or examples of good democratic governance in the Middle East will be presented. A special attention will be paid to the need of covering different countries and collectivises, as well as tools for the promotion of democracy, in such a way that the spectrum represented is as broad as possible and therefore representative of the many ethnic, social and cultural diversity throughout the region. At the same time, the organisation of the seminar will ensure that some of the best practices presented had counted on the Spanish cooperation support and in this way this Seminar will contribute to the visibility of the results and the impact of our cooperation, increasing the standing of the Spanish brand.

The seminar will conclude with a fifth session, in which the speakers and the audience will be engaged in a debate aimed at drawing together the conclusions and recommendations of the two-day study on the opportunities and threats that the Arab Spring poses for Official Development Assistance. These conclusions and recommendations will be released as the principal result of the seminar among the civil society, the donor countries and the ODA recipients.

Each intervention at the round tables (sessions two, three and four) shall be limited to 12 minutes.

Date and Place:

The seminar will take place in Jerusalem on February 12 and 13, 2014.

Participants:

The CEMOFPSC will count on the participation of Spanish and international experts and on an audience of more than 50 persons. The focus will be multidisciplinary in order to discuss, in the frame of Spanish Cooperation, the relevance of the SDGs in Middle East society, which are fragmented and formed by a myriad of cultural, social and ethnic minorities.

The group of experts will be made of representatives from different areas: political, diplomatic, foreign commerce, communication, think thank, university, private companies, development actors, civil society representatives, etc.

Spain, Italy, the European Union, Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Territories will be the participant countries.

All the experts will participate actively, and each one will have the opportunity to present a Communication that will be published.

Visibility:

The brochures, the posters and the publication of the minutes will all mirror the identity of the sponsors of the seminar.

The documents of work, the articles of the participants and the conclusions of the seminar, will be published in form of workbook. This workbook will be spread in paper and digital version in, at least, two languages, Spanish and English.

The diffusion of the contents of the seminar will be made, among other means, through the webpage www.cemofpsc.org, where the most relevant texts can be consulted as well as the rest of CEMOFPSO publications.

Languages:

English will be the language of the Seminar.

Contact person:

Enric Roig Tió
Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture
Calle Huertas 71, 5ºD. 28014. Madrid (Spain)
Tel.: + 34 91 344 01 76
Fax: + 34 91 344 03 66
e.roig@fundacionfpso.org