



# DEMOCRATICALLY ENGAGED LIBYA (DEL)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Libya remains in flux between violent conflict and dialogue. The notion of peace has the potential to materialize; with the upcoming National Conference, the two major factions have the option to decide on the future of their country. If the disputing sides choose to continue using channels of communications rather than violence, Canada will have a timely opportunity to engage in a Track II initiative that would contribute to the long-term peace process. The aim of this project will be to create transparency, openness, and legitimacy in the event that a democratic process is chosen as the path forward. The political situation remains fragile, with both internal and external interests vying for power and interests, while the UN is sponsoring a National Conference, tasked with allowing disputants to endorse a constitution and put into motion an electoral process. The result of this Conference has the ability to contribute significantly to the long-term stability of Libya. Chief among stabilizing factors is legitimacy, both of the constitution and subsequent elections, which would imply approval of the peace process by major stakeholders and the population at large. Therefore, maximizing participation in the electoral process is integral to the process of democratic legitimation. Given the unstable situation that currently exists in Libya, the proposed Track II initiative's focus on grassroots projects and changing attitudes aims to impact future election legitimacy provides a cost-effective and long-term response that is congruent with Canada's international interests.

## OBJECTIVES

Democratically Engaged Libya (DEL) aims to contribute to the democratic legitimization process through a grassroots-oriented education and information campaign, with the stated objectives of:

**Increasing Registered Voters** The Libyan High National Elections Commission (HNEC) ran a campaign in 2018 to increase the number of voters for elections set for later that year that did not come to fruition.<sup>1</sup> DEL would build upon the HNEC campaign to maximize voter registration.

**Increasing Turnout** Libya's 2019 municipal elections garnered just 38% turnout and the 2014 elections saw a 42% turnout rate amongst the total population.<sup>2</sup> DEL strives to maximize turnout on election day.

**Women's Participation** Women made up roughly 40% of voters in the 2014 election and only 19% of candidates. A main objective of DEL is to increase the number of women and members of at-risk communities that participate in the electoral process.

**Democratic Literacy** Libyans have stated that the information about voting and the democratic process in general has been limited.<sup>3</sup> Educating the population about democracy, as well as the logistics of the electoral system and processes is an essential task for future elections.

**Democratic Legitimacy** Increasing the perceived legitimacy of the National Conference process, the resulting constitution, and subsequent election and its results would allow for the country to make inroads toward a stable future.

## STAKEHOLDERS

DEL will be run through Global Affairs Canada's Peace and Stabilization Operations Program (PSOPs).<sup>4</sup> The organization's expertise in international conflict prevention, mediation, and post-conflict recovery integration in North Africa will prove instrumental in providing resources and expertise. If possible, UN-backing of the project would be important in ensuring the perception of neutrality and increasing trust in the project's democracy-promoting message.

DEL will also require the input of several stakeholders. The International Fund for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the Forum for Democratic Libya (FDL) will prove critical, especially in the early phases of the project. The former has institutional experience in developing electorally-focused strategic communications with the Libyan population, a history of projects that increased the role of women and marginalized groups, as well as a history of partnership with Libya's Election Commission, which is highly trusted by much of the population.<sup>5</sup> As such, it will be instrumental in providing its existing evaluation, methodological, and technical infrastructure to the project. The latter organization will likewise prove useful in advising and developing the projects' grassroots information initiatives, given its previous survey capabilities and experience engaging Libyans about the democratic process in 15 locations across the country.<sup>6</sup>

Stakeholders also include the residents of coastal Libyan cities, and in particular women and at-risk groups. These stakeholders represent the project's main targets in terms of increasing electoral participation and outcomes. They also represent the project's main beneficiaries in terms of any stabilizing effects from the constitutional process and electoral legitimacy.

Finally, DEL indirectly implicates regional stakeholders with vested interests in the conflict, such as the Government of National Accord (GNA), the House of Representatives (HoR), and the Libyan National Army (LNA). Increasing the legitimacy of the electoral process influences each group's cost/benefit analysis when engaging in conflict, contestation, and acceptance of election results. The UN, the EU, and in particular France and Italy, hold vested interests in the stability of the region, which is affected by the project's stated objectives.

## PRE-PROJECT RISK ASSESSMENT

### **Pre-Conditions and Considerations**

A UN-supported National Conference, which aims to bring together disputing Libyan factions to approve a foundational constitution and electoral process, is slated to take place in the Libyan city of Ghadames on April 14-16, 2019. The outcome of this Conference is in the hands of relevant parties with the backdrop of fragmenting trust in the mediation process that has led to the Conference's formation. Parties have signaled their openness toward holding elections in 2019 and there remains some optimism for democratic stability within the country despite largescale violence since the ousting of Gaddafi in 2011. Incentives remain for at least one side to continue the conflict for territory, economic gains, and leverage, but most external stakeholders have unequivocally denounced any further violent advances. The successful implementation of this project is conditional on the attendance of all parties and concrete, mutually-agreeable developments made toward holding a democratic electoral process at the National Conference. Without such progress, the conflict within Libya remains fraught with the potential for a major civil war.

If the parties at the Conference are able to agree upon a democratic path forward for the country, Canada has a role to play in the successful transition of power and reconciliation, beginning with education and information on democracy and the electoral process—providing the tools that enable the Libyan people to vote on their stable future. Canada has a clear mandate through the Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) to promote a more peaceful, inclusive, and prosperous world through the advancement of women and girls. Therefore, enabling women and at-risk populations in fragile countries, such as Libya, to be engaged participants in the political process from the ground up is of the utmost importance for the transition of the country. Canada also has an interest to see that the invocation of a signature policy of the country, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine, was not in vain but rather seen as a foreign policy tool that is required in rare moments of need and which results in peace and security upon its application.

The situation in Libya requires other external and internal considerations before implementation, including:

**Failed State** Libya currently has two opposing governments and central banking system. A divided political and institutional system ensures a complicated process of reaching a consensus and buy-in from all sides of the fractured system.

**Violence** The potential for widespread violence to emerge between the major parties and/or a re-emergence of external terrorist groups have the ability to weaken the security of the country's major cities and further postpone elections. The LNA has incentives to gain greater leverage through territorial gains in advance of further peace talks, and General Haftar's recent offensives are a testament to this possibility.<sup>7</sup>

**Displacement** Libya has over 217,000 internally displaced persons, making effective outreach to such large numbers of scattered populations challenging.<sup>8</sup>

**External Disputes** Italian and French divergence on economic and political interests are liable to cause disagreements over which parties are more suitable for the country's future. Canada should remain impartial in pursuit of a peaceful transition of power regardless of electoral outcomes and ensure allies' support in this domain. Canada must ensure that external disputes do not hinder the peace process.

**Human Rights** Reports of imprisonment, torture, and enslaving of African asylum-seekers have emerged as a consequence of the EU-brokered migration deal that has stemmed the flow of asylum-seekers crossing the Mediterranean Sea. Canada cannot be seen as legitimizing these human rights abuses.

**Media** Libya suffers from an extremely partisan media presence in the wake of the conflict. Most radio and TV channels espouse narrow narratives that defend either of the parties.<sup>9</sup> Canada must be aware of the social media landscape it intends to enter, with potential difficulties for the project due to a generalized distrust of media within the population.<sup>10</sup>

**Alliances** Awareness of tribal alliances and cultural sensitivities will be an important consideration.

## Logistics of Project

**Location:** Identified areas of engagement for DEL will emphasize the main cities of Tripoli, Benghazi, and Tobruk for maximum outreach potential, pre-existing communications infrastructure, and civil society density.

**Timing:** The National Conference will be the catalyst for the full rollout of this project. However, preliminary work including research, surveying, and capacity building will begin in early April 2019. The estimated timeframe of DEL will be two years, from April 2019 to April 2021.

**Medium:** DEL will use social media and SMS as the main medium of information dissemination, taking advantage of Libya's high rate of cellphone and social media usage.<sup>11</sup> DEL will also make use of grassroots-initiated education and canvassing through local CSOs.

## Possible Impact

Through DEL, Canada has the opportunity to work with Libyans to create an environment that fosters durable stability.

**Legitimizing Government** Having an engaged and knowledgeable citizenry in the political process legitimizes the democratic system and gives elected representatives a clear mandate to provide stability within the country. In fact, "knowledge, communication, [and] awareness" of local governments within Libya have been highly correlated to their perceived legitimacy.<sup>12</sup> This has the potential to affect further changes including the consolidation of divided institutions and the national army.

**Reducing Violent Conflict** Lack of security is something Libyans have identified as one of their biggest issues.<sup>13</sup> Democracy has the ability to channel disputes in a systematic and effective manner—reducing the chances for the outbreak of violence between varying parties depends on strong institutional foundations.

**Empowering Women** Providing diverse ideas, grievances, and viewpoints, especially in the foundational stages of a democracy, are essential for the sustainable growth of its institutions and provides for the greater welfare of the general population. Providing women with the tools for fully participating in the democratic process would aid in this regard.

## PROJECT DESIGN & APPROACH

The project will be broken into three main phases, with a tentative rollout for April 2019 continuing into April 2021.

### Phase I: Preliminary Work [Budget: \$1 million]

**Team Selection** A task-force based in Ottawa within GAC that includes experts on Libya, democratic transitions, political mediation and conflict resolution will be created.

**Research and Background** Developing a country-context report with most up to date information. The report will build on the country's previous country diagnostic and include extensive qualitative and

quantitative information on the country's current state. Likely election dates will be projected and tentatively aimed for.

**Information Gathering** The project team will work with partner organizations, especially IFES and Forum for a Democratic Libya, to distinguish the country's current understanding of democracy and opinions on other sensitive political issues (i.e. women's rights, access to vote, security, and access to accurate information). Partnerships, training, and funding plans will be created with local CSOs, municipal councils, and telecommunications providers.

**Security** Given the recent increase in violence in the country,<sup>14</sup> the security concerns of workers and partners will be assessed through institutional expertise and open communication with local organizations. High care will be taken to prioritize safety, and changes in location, timing, and scaling of the project will be considered to maximize both security and project impact.

## Phase II: Information and Education Campaign [Budget: \$17 million]

**Local Engagement** 53% of Libyans have attended or would attend a CSO meeting,<sup>15</sup> This provides a major opening for Canada to engage with local CSOs in Tripoli, Benghazi, and Tobruk to deliver resources and training in order to better equip resident staff and volunteers with the tools necessary to promote democracy as well as provide electoral information on how to register and vote, where to vote, who is running, and other vitally important information to facilitate an open and free election. Municipal council engagement will also be encouraged given that a plurality of Libyans place the greatest trust in local governments.<sup>16</sup>

**Social Media** Emphasis will be placed on a non-partisan focus that highlights the importance of the democratic process to long-term stability, hopefully minimizing security concerns and targeting by regional stakeholders. Facebook and Viber's penetration in the country, especially in major cities, is an entrance point for a social media education and information campaign. Three main areas will be touched on by the information campaign, each pertaining to different facets of democratization. These will generally be divided into 1) facilitative and practical information on voting procedures, 2) information on the constitution, rights, and the democratic process, and 3) information on the link between democratic legitimacy and stability. This information will be disseminated through social media in a variety of ways: namely, through advertisements, personalized messages, interactive links, and interactive Stickers. Emphasis will be placed on providing immediate information on registration, voting, and overall civic engagement

**SMS** In conjunction with the social media campaign and with the aid of local telecommunications companies, very high populations penetration is hoped to be reached in the days leading up to the election. Information disseminated through SMS will focus on the practical details of voting times, locations, and other relevant information. Given that cell phone penetration in Libya approaches 201% among virtually all demographics,<sup>17</sup> it is predicted that the SMS initiative will increase turnout on election day.

**Canvassing** To minimize costs, DEL intends to use existing civil society organizations within the three targeted cities to engage in local canvassing as a supplement to the social media initiative. Much of the same information will be disseminated through the canvassing project but will be limited to existing social and civil networks. As such, collaboration with local civil society groups will be integral for this portion of the project.



## Phase III: Post-Project Reflection and Renewal [Budget: \$2 million]

**Evaluation Report** The project's impact will be evaluated. This will be accomplished regardless of the political outcome within Libya. In the event of an election, post-election evaluation in collaboration with CSOs will determine changes in perceived government legitimacy and other project objectives. In the event of election postponement, similar evaluation will be conducted to determine the potential long-term impact on future democratic consolidation. Project renewal and scaling up will be considered if the evaluation report shows evidence of improvements in the desired metrics.

## MEASURABLES & POST-PROJECT ASSESSMENT

The suggested project is particularly amenable to measuring success criteria, which can be divided into four main clusters:

- 1) An increase in the number of registered voters from the eligible population.
- 2) An increased total number of votes on election day, including among women.
- 3) An increase in the number of women registered to vote, and more women candidates.
- 4) Measurable changes in attitudes towards constitutional or democratic legitimacy, democratic literacy, and democratic desirability within the population

These facets will be measured in collaboration with The International Fund for Electoral System's existing survey capabilities. Depending on capabilities, a bidding process will be initiated for additional resources, with Libyan research firm Diwan showing promise in conducting similar surveys.<sup>18</sup> Voting registration statistics will be obtained from the High National Elections Commission. Methodology will generally follow similar survey-projects in Libya, dividing participants into regional clusters of Eastern, Central, and Western and by age and sex.<sup>19</sup> Survey questions will be prepared to rank subjective responses on factors such as legitimacy, and the survey will be administered through canvassing and phone calls.

Through such initiatives, it is predicted that maximum effectiveness of the project will be attained. Strategies will be monitored in conjunction with survey results to determine the most effective outreach methods in each location. Final-stage surveys will be conducted immediately post-election (or until the project's two-year end), and four years thereafter to measure the persistence of the project's impact. It is projected that the project will continue to have impact during the four-year period given the grassroots and organizational capabilities that it will leave behind.

The overall success of DEL will be determined by its contribution to an increase in democratic legitimacy in Libya. This Track II initiative would contribute to the likelihood of the most desirable outcome identified in Libya's diagnostic report: a peaceful transition of power anchored by a strong sense of democratic validity. As such, it has the potential to increase stability and the future government's capacity across the country. Depending on the project's success, follow-up activities would include potential renewal and scaling-up of the project to further cultivate a democratic awareness in Libya. Similar projects could be replicated in other contexts to add further stability in conflict-prone regions.

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<sup>1</sup> “Libya.” 2019. USAID ElectionsGuide. <http://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/123/>.

The last national elections in 2014 saw only 630,000 votes cast with roughly 1.5 million registered voters of a country of 4.5 million eligible voters, according to the Libyan High National Elections Commission.

<sup>2</sup> “IPU PARLINE Database: LIBYA (Majlis Al-Nuwaab), Last Elections.” n.d. Accessed April 7, 2019. [http://archive.ipu.org/parline/reports/2185\\_E.htm](http://archive.ipu.org/parline/reports/2185_E.htm).

<sup>3</sup> “New Survey on Libyan Voters’ Attitudes Toward Political Situation and Future Elections | IFES.” 2018. Accessed April 7, 2019. <https://www.ifes.org/surveys/new-survey-libyan-voters-attitudes-toward-political-situation-and-future-elections>. And “Voters’ Opinions of the Election Process in Libya,” *USAID*, March 2013. <https://bit.ly/2U5rS5a>.

From polling data and focus group research, a majority of Libyans believe that the information they receive prior to elections—from municipal to national—has been insufficient and 79% of Libyans believe their system is not democratic or a democracy with major problems. However, Libyans generally believe that elections are important and that fellow compatriots should participate

<sup>4</sup> GAC. 2019. Peace and Stabilization Operations Program. Retrieved from [https://international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues\\_developpement-enjeux\\_developpement/reponse\\_conflict-reponse\\_conflits/psop.aspx?lang=eng](https://international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/reponse_conflict-reponse_conflits/psop.aspx?lang=eng)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> “Understanding Libya’s Civil Society.” 2018. Middle East Institute. Accessed April 7, 2019. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/understanding-libyas-civil-society>.

<sup>7</sup> “While You Weren’t Looking, General Haftar Has Been Taking Over Libya.” 2019. Foreign Policy. Accessed April 7, 2019. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/04/01/while-you-werent-looking-general-haftar-has-been-taking-over-libya-oil-united-nations/>.

<sup>8</sup> “Libya.” 2019. UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/libya.html>

<sup>9</sup> “Libya.” 2018. Media Landscapes. Accessed April 7, 2019. <https://medialandscapes.org/country/libya/media/digital-media>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> “Libyan Municipal Council Research.” 2018. Center for Insights in Survey Research. Accessed April 7 2019. <https://bit.ly/2Vtgt1g>.

<sup>13</sup> “New Survey on Libyan Voters’ Attitudes Toward Political Situation and Future Elections | IFES.” 2018. Accessed April 7, 2019. <https://www.ifes.org/surveys/new-survey-libyan-voters-attitudes-toward-political-situation-and-future-elections>.

<sup>14</sup> “Libyan Commander Orders Forces to Move on Tripoli.” CBC. April 4, 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/un-chief-libya-violence-tripoli-1.5084089>.

<sup>15</sup> “New Survey on Libyan Voters’ Attitudes Toward Political Situation and Future Elections | IFES.” 2018. Accessed April 7, 2019. <https://www.ifes.org/surveys/new-survey-libyan-voters-attitudes-toward-political-situation-and-future-elections>.

<sup>16</sup> “Libyan Municipal Council Research.” 2018. Center for Insights in Survey Research. Accessed April 7 2019. <https://bit.ly/2Vtgt1g>.

<sup>17</sup> “Libya.” 2018. Media Landscapes. Accessed April 7, 2019. <https://medialandscapes.org/country/libya/media/digital-media>

<sup>18</sup> “Libya Status of Women Survey Report.” n.d., 12. <https://bit.ly/2FOUATi>.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.