

SNAPSHOT

USAID is supporting Libyan women to play an active role in constitution development, transitional justice, and reconciliation.



A member of Phoenix Libya posts a flyer as part of a campaign for peaceful reintegration of militia members.

“The Mafqood Center is a place where there is no difference between Libyans. We are all the same here, man or woman, no matter what.”

--Woman who participated in the advocacy skills training at the Mafqood Center

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Libyan Women in the Lead

May 2013 – Last March the unthinkable happened in Benghazi – a group of female leaders from six cities gathered to talk about women’s involvement in drafting the new constitution, ending violence and discrimination against women, and grassroots advocacy campaigns to protect women’s rights. As the people strive to build a democratic future, a new voice is being heard - the voice of Libyan women.

This is an important change. Empowering women to have an equal voice allows them to participate in decision-making that will shape Libya’s future. USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) is supporting activities that enable women to speak up and create positive change in their country.

OTI is partnering with the Tiwatriwin Association to establish an internet center and provide computer training for women in Yefren, an isolated area of marginalized communities. The center provides women with a safe space to access information, connect with people, and communicate about issues central to their lives. Here women learn to conduct political campaigns and facilitate dialogues to support female participation in the development of Libya’s new constitution.

Women are also playing a critical role as catalysts for peace and reconciliation. Phoenix Libya, an OTI-supported organization founded by five women who met in Tunisia as refugees during the revolution, marched through two eastern cities in January, canvassing the streets with posters calling for militias to disarm and reintegrate back into their communities.

OTI also provided computer and advocacy skills training at the female-led Mafqood Center, which offers social and legal support services to families of people “missing” from the revolution. The center is the vision of a dynamic Libyan woman, Mervat Mhani, who ensures many of the trainees are women.

Faced with numerous challenges during this critical period, Libyan women are using their newly found voices to protect their interests and promote their rights. In support, OTI is partnering with prominent women’s rights activist Nissa Qadimat to strengthen a national movement to mobilize women in the transitional process.

While much work remains, women’s voices are clearly at the forefront of efforts to create a new, democratic Libya.

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