



“GIVE US CHANGE WE CAN SEE”

CITIZEN VIEWS OF LIBYA’S POLITICAL PROCESS



FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUPS IN LIBYA

Conducted October 28 - November 10, 2012

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NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that responds to the aspirations of people around the world to live in democratic societies that recognize and promote basic human rights. Since its founding in 1983, NDI and its local partners have worked to support and strengthen political and civic organizations, safeguard elections, and promote citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. With staff members and volunteer political practitioners from more than 100 nations, NDI brings together individuals and groups to share ideas, knowledge, experiences and expertise. Partners receive broad exposure to best practices in international democratic development that can be adapted to the needs of their own countries. NDI's multinational approach reinforces the message that while there is no single democratic model, certain core principles are shared by all democracies. The Institute's work upholds the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It also promotes the development of institutionalized channels of communications among citizens, political institutions and elected officials, and strengthens their ability to improve the quality of life for all citizens. For more information about NDI, please visit www.ndi.org.

PREFACE

On July 7, 2012 Libya held its first democratic national elections since the 2011 revolution that ended Muammar Gaddafi's 42-year dictatorship and initiated a transition to democratic rule. Newly elected members of the General National Congress (GNC) now face the challenge of establishing a framework for drafting a new constitution and developing a precedent for representative government in a country with no history of accountable governance. Mounting public concerns over deteriorating security conditions, waning confidence in government competence, rising economic woes, and impatience with bureaucratic inertia are additional challenges Libya's new leaders must address. This round of focus group research took place four months after the GNC elections and two months following the Congress' inauguration.

Purpose. In order to provide political and civic leaders in Libya with timely and objective information about citizens' priorities and perspectives during the political transition, the National Democratic Institute (NDI or the Institute) led a qualitative public opinion study in six cities across Libya from October 28 to November 10, 2012. The study comprised 16 focus group discussions throughout the country and examined the following:

- Reflections on the extent to which the political transition is meeting citizen expectations;
- Perceptions of voters and non-voters in the country's July 7, 2012 elections and the unfolding political transition;
- Attitudes toward the performance of political parties and the newly elected GNC;
- Views on priority issues and key concerns; and,
- Expectations and hopes for the future.

The Institute commissioned International Advisory Services (IAS) to organize the study in six cities across the country. IAS is an international research and advisory company with regional offices in Tripoli. This study marks the third national round of qualitative research on political issues conducted since the revolution, and is intended to provide analysis on Libyan citizen attitudes toward the evolving political transition.

Focus Group Research: Focus groups are open-ended group interviews directed by a moderator and following a pre-set guideline. The purpose of focus group research is to understand the attitudes, opinions, and experiences of participants who are recruited for the exercise. Focus groups are particularly useful in gaining a deeper appreciation of the motivations, feelings, and values behind participants' reactions. In addition, the group format enables respondents to participate in an exchange of ideas – thus revealing a more in-depth understanding of why opinions are held – that may not emerge in individual in-depth interviews or quantitative surveys. Focus group discussions comprise a small number of participants, typically eight-12 per group. Focus group findings represent only a snapshot of opinions at the moment the research is undertaken. Given the dynamism of the Libyan transition, public opinion is in constant

flux as citizens respond to unfolding events. The conclusions of this report therefore only represent opinions when research was conducted in late October and early November 2012.

Method. From October 28 to November 10, 2012, NDI held 16 focus groups in six cities across Libya with a widespread geographical representation: Benghazi, Derna, Misrata, Sabha, Tripoli and Zintan. Target cities were selected based on their population size and geographic location. To capture the perspectives of a broad cross-section of Libyan society, NDI divided the groups by gender, education level (secondary education or less and those with a more than secondary-level education) and age (18-35 and over 35). Each group comprised between seven and 11 participants. To ascertain perspectives from Libyan citizens who did not participate in the elections, the Institute held 12 groups with voters and four groups with non-voters. The decision to conduct discreet groups with voters and non-voters was based on the understanding that non-voters would potentially be uncomfortable speaking about their decision not to participate in the election if they attended groups along with participants who voted. Two of the non-voter groups were held exclusively with women participants (one 18-35 and one over 35) and two of the non-voter groups were held exclusively with men (one 18-35 and one over 35). In both the voter and non-voter groups, participants were selected and re-screened to ensure gender parity and a diverse representation of neighborhoods, socioeconomic backgrounds, education levels and professions.

Staffing and Logistics: The moderators conducting all focus groups were Libyan citizens trained in moderator techniques by IAS. All groups were conducted in Libyan Arabic and transcripts were prepared in Arabic and English.

Group Locations: The 16 focus groups outlined in this report were conducted in six locations throughout Libya – Benghazi, Derna, Misrata, Sabha, Tripoli, and Zintan (see the map in this section). Locations selected for the study were urban or semi-urban areas. In all cases, appropriate venues for focus group discussions were identified to ensure participant privacy and sufficient space for indirect observation by NDI and IAS staff.

Outside Influence: In all cases, every effort was made to ensure there was no undue influence exerted on the participants in the groups. The focus group guideline was not shared with local authorities prior to the groups. In this study, there was no case in which the findings from one or more groups differed radically from findings in the groups overall, which suggests that any local influence that may have occurred did not impact the research.

MAP OF LIBYA



One World Nations Online. November, 2011.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores public opinion in Libya in the fall of 2012. Based on 16 focus group discussions with more than 145 participants, the report examines perceptions of the July 7, 2012 national election from the perspectives of both voters and non-voters, as well as citizen attitudes toward the General National Congress (GNC), upcoming constitution-drafting process, and the unfolding political transition. Participants were asked about their views on the direction of the country, including assessments of the July elections, priorities for the constitution-drafting process, and impressions of political parties and governing institutions. Though most participants still believe the country is headed in the right direction, the findings highlight the disappointment of citizens who are anxious to see the GNC's tangible accomplishments and view the Congress as already falling short of expectations. While those who voted in the July 2012 elections remain broadly committed to a democratic transition, growing frustration with elected leaders reinforces concerns that those in positions of power do not have the skills and experience to resolve the issues of greatest concern to citizens, particularly stabilizing the country's chaotic security landscape.

The Congress faces considerable challenges and will need to take proactive steps to manage citizen expectations, provide opportunities for public input into the upcoming constitution-drafting process, demonstrate leadership, and begin delivering improvements that Libyans can feel in their daily lives. A summary of the main findings can be found below. The full results, along with selected quotations from participants, can be found in the Principal Findings section of this report.

I. National Direction

Although nearly all participants express significant concern over Libya's security challenges and disappointment with the country's new government, many still believe that the country is headed in the right direction. They point to the unprecedented opportunity to elect representatives in the recent national elections, a sense of forward political momentum, and a flourishing civil society as indications that the country is on the right track.

However, many participants – even those who enthusiastically claim the country is headed in the right direction – complain that progress is too slow. Many participants claim that the transition has yet to deliver on the promises of the revolution, in terms of both political transformation and improvements to daily life. Participants who believe the country is headed in the wrong direction cite the absence of public services, a sense of squandered political momentum, and deteriorating security as dangerous for their country's future.

Participants have mixed opinions over whether Libya's emerging protest culture is benefiting or hindering the transition. Some respondents see public demonstrations as a civic responsibility and a vital act of self-expression, while others are discouraged by the frequent sight of armed protestors confronting the GNC and believe their fellow citizens

should recognize the monumental challenges facing Libya's new leaders and be patient.

Participants rarely consider the government responsible for positive developments. Instead, participants nearly unanimously ascribe credit to the Libyan people for carrying out the revolution and maintaining stability in the absence of effective governing and security institutions.

There is considerable disappointment that the elected GNC is failing to distinguish itself from its predecessor, the appointed National Transitional Council (NTC), by not proactively confronting key challenges, including the proliferation of weapons.

The presence of perceived Gaddafi loyalists and former regime officials in the GNC and government ministries hinders public confidence in governing institutions. Some participants believe Gaddafi loyalists will continue to obstruct Libya's development.

II. Security and Rule of Law

Libya's volatile security landscape is the most significant reason for pessimism, and is most often cited as evidence that the country is headed in the wrong direction. Even optimistic participants believe that stability depends on the government's ability to control the flow of weapons, rein in disparate militias, establish an army, strengthen the police, and help people feel safe in their homes and neighborhoods.

Despite believing that the government is responsible for protecting its citizens, few participants have confidence in the government's capacity to strengthen or organize security forces, or to enforce laws. Many participants claim that in the absence of government action, neighborhood volunteers, revolutionaries, tribal forces, and local militias are providing security. There is a desire to move away from these ad-hoc solutions to security challenges.

III. Economic and Governance Challenges

Participants are increasingly worried about the economy. Public discussion of Libya's oil wealth and Gaddafi's frozen assets has led to confusion over why citizens are not reaping the benefits of their country's supposed riches. Participants blame unemployment, particularly among youth, for rising crime.

The sense of acute national unity celebrated by participants in focus group research conducted in November 2011 is being eclipsed by the assertion of competing regional identities to counter concerns over government centralization in Tripoli. Respondents in the South and smaller cities outside of Tripoli describe feeling marginalized and ignored by decision makers in their country's capital.

Participants feel disconnected and abandoned by their elected representatives. They are disappointed that the GNC is failing to engage citizens or take action on issues of public concern.

Regardless of whether their local council was elected or appointed, participants are frustrated with their local governments. They broadly describe their local councils as inactive, powerless, and constrained by a lack of support and funding from the central government.

IV. Elections

Participants are proud and enthusiastic about their country’s historic July 7, 2012 national elections. Respondents in all cities describe the excitement of participating in Libya’s first democratic elections in decades.

Most participants describe the elections as well-organized and broadly see the outcomes as legitimate. There is consensus that the elections defied expectations and that people were able to vote freely and safely. The handful of participants, generally non-voters, who claim the elections were unfair are rarely able to point to specific instances of manipulation and instead reference rumors and hearsay.

Some participants – even those who view the 2012 elections positively – criticize the process for its compressed timeframe and difficulty accessing information on candidates, political parties, and voting processes. Many respondents describe confusion over the candidates, political parties, and even the electoral process itself.

Overall, participants rate their knowledge and understanding of the electoral process as fair. However, even among those participants who consider themselves well-informed, there is a strong desire for more information about the process and candidate options. Participants who did not vote rated themselves the least informed, indicating potential opportunities for voter information campaigns to influence citizen participation in future elections.

Most respondents participated in the elections out of a sense of civic responsibility and the desire to contribute to positive change in their country. They describe feeling empowered by the act of voting and believe their votes made a difference in the results.

Participants offer a variety of reasons for not voting. Some non-voting participants recounted problems with their registration or difficulties accessing the polls on election day, while others, particularly those in Benghazi, abstained in protest of a perceived marginalization of the East. Women participants who did not vote cited family obligations and security concerns. Some participants claim they did not vote because they were unable to find candidates or political parties that appealed to them.

Personal relationships appear to have influenced voter choices more than candidate qualifications. Some voters argue that it is important to personally know a candidate in order to gauge their credibility. Others, particularly those with higher education levels, complain that people voted for friends and neighbors instead of selecting the most qualified candidate.

Tribal allegiances influenced voting choices in the South. Some participants from Sabha acknowledge that they and their neighbors voted for candidates affiliated with or openly supported by their tribes. There is disagreement among these participants over whether tribal relationships should have played a role in the elections.

V. The General National Congress (GNC)

The widely perceived lack of progress is eroding public confidence in the GNC. Some participants criticize the GNC for not yet taking action on key issues such as reining in militias, drafting the constitution, or stabilizing the economy. There is little confidence in the capacity of GNC members to help their constituents.

The GNC is broadly seen as chaotic and poorly organized. Participants are critical of GNC members, describing them as unprofessional, frequently absent, self-interested, and unequipped to govern the country.

With insufficient information from the GNC, participants make their own assumptions about how the body is operating. While some participants are willing to show patience toward the GNC, better communication and transparent decision-making are critical for Libyans to feel more confident that the GNC is making progress on important issues.

A lack of understanding of the GNC's mandate and its roles and responsibilities frequently translate into dissatisfaction with the body's performance. As they are unsure of the exact roles and responsibilities of the GNC, participants tended to ascribe to it all of the country's current ills.

There is disagreement over the role of women in Libya's political life. While some participants, particularly women, believe women should play an active role in public life, other participants see women as ill-suited for leadership and too beholden to traditional family responsibilities to contribute meaningfully to politics. Some male participants state that they do not believe a woman could represent them, but that they are confident Libyan women could be represented by male Congress members.

VI. Constitutional Development

While nearly all participants agree that the constitution should draw heavily on Islamic Shari'a law, the key debate emerging among citizens is whether the constitution will be based exclusively on Shari'a or whether Shari'a will be identified as one important reference among others.

There is disagreement over whether the future constitution should include specific provisions addressing women's rights. Some male participants argue that if the constitution is based on Islamic Shari'a law, then entrenching women's rights would be redundant as Islam protects the rights of women.

Awareness of the constitution-drafting process is low. While participants generally believe a constitution is important for the future of the country, few acknowledge having any information on the constitution-drafting process.

Nevertheless, citizens want and expect to play a key role in the constitutional development process. Many participants lack confidence in the GNC's capacity to oversee the constitution-drafting process. They agree that an inclusive drafting process is necessary to ensure that the constitution has legitimacy and believe that there should be opportunities for input from both technical experts and ordinary citizens.

VII. Islam and Politics

Participants reaffirm that Libya is a conservative religious society; most want and expect Islam to play a role in political life. Respondents of all backgrounds assert that Libya is an Islamic country and that religion will naturally govern public life to a certain degree.

Libyans overwhelmingly agree that moderate Islamic principles should influence governance, but opinions vary on exactly what that means in terms of the role religion should play in public life. There is consensus on the need to avoid extremism.

There is limited support for a separation between religion and politics. Some participants explain that religion will always play an important cultural role, but should have limited influence in the political sphere. Politicians who emphasize religion in their speeches are broadly seen as dishonest or attempting to emotionally manipulate people.

Although participants overwhelmingly declare their desire to live in a “moderate Islamic country,” they struggle to define what the term ‘moderate’ means to them. They describe moderate Islam as a rejection of extremism, both extreme secularism and extreme Islam.

VIII. Political Parties and Movements

Goodwill and receptivity toward political parties has faded following the elections. Some participants are disappointed that parties failed to fulfill campaign promises or that they ceased interacting with people beyond the election campaign. Others are disillusioned by struggles among parties in the new government and believe that parties are obstructing progress by placing their interests before the country's.

Some participants remain convinced that political parties have no place in Libya's new politics. They see them as untrustworthy, conniving, and motivated by secret and possibly foreign interests. They are concerned that political parties are potentially divisive and could cause conflict among Libyans at a time when the country needs to be united.

Political parties are still struggling to overcome the legacy of four decades of Gaddafi's propaganda against parties. Gaddafi banned political parties and several participants still recall the popular regime slogan “whoever joins a political party is a traitor.”

Many Libyans still do not understand the roles and functions of political parties in general or – more specifically – the motivations and identities of Libya's many new political movements. The pervasive lack of available information on parties leads to a poor understanding of their role among citizens, which directly fuels suspicion and skepticism. Some participants are willing to be convinced of parties' constructive role if parties will simply make the effort to reach out to them and explain themselves.

Most participants claim they seek a moderate Islamic-oriented party that is transparent and clear in its goals, has no foreign loyalties, and is committed to serving the Libyan people and developing the country. Above all, participants want political parties to deliver tangible improvements to their daily lives.

IX. Looking Forward

When asked to describe their visions for Libya's future, participants express hope that their country will become a developed nation where citizens enjoy their rights and benefit from a strong, growing economy. Participants feel their country has vast potential and believe the lack of progress must be attributable to mismanagement or neglect by the country's new authorities.

Participants are frustrated by what they see as the failure of the current authorities to deliver the changes they envisioned after the revolution. They want to be reassured that their country is being led by transparent and honest people who are committed to honoring the goals of the revolution. Regardless of age, geography, and gender, participants seek reassurances that their representatives will be accountable to them. They want their elected leaders to fully assume their responsibilities, solve the deepening security crisis, protect the goals of the revolution, and truly serve the Libyan people.

PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

This study is both a continuation of previous research from November 2011 and April 2012 that explored citizens' opinions of the political transition following the February 2011 revolution and a first look at perceptions of the July 7, 2012 national elections and Libya's first democratically elected government in more than four decades. The stakes could hardly be higher as stability may depend on ordinary citizens' assessment of the ability of the newly elected General National Congress (GNC) to manage public expectations and deliver meaningful improvements in key areas of concern, particularly security. To determine what factors will influence that assessment, NDI conducted 16 focus groups with more than 145 participants throughout Libya. The findings, drawn from participants' comments, are below.

I. National Direction

Although nearly all participants express significant concern over Libya's security challenges and disappointment with the country's new government, many still believe that the country is headed in the right direction. While most participants consider the prospects for the future to be brighter than they were under Gaddafi's venal rule, they are frustrated by the newly elected GNC's inability to deliver tangible improvements to their daily lives and the slow pace of reform.

“You can't move forward and develop without making mistakes. In general I see Libya moving in the right direction. There is some stuff that needs to be fixed, but there are positives.” Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“After the revolution, we waited for the elections because we thought things would improve. I am happy to be free of Gaddafi and think we are moving forward, but I am still waiting for my children to feel safe and the government to get to work.” Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“We're going in the right direction but it is happening slowly given the fact that we have so much to change and build.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

“We have taken our first step towards change; this in itself is a big reason for optimism. Yes there are negatives and challenges along the way, but if God wills it we will overturn them. Building a country takes a lot of effort and time. We are taking our first steps for a better future.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

Participants who believe the country is moving in the right direction point to successful national elections, a sense of forward political momentum, and a flourishing civil society as indications that the country is on the right track. Others mention the experience of exercising new freedoms and the unprecedented opportunity to elect their own representatives. Many claim that the revolution has empowered them with a new confidence to stand up to corrupt or inefficient leaders.

"I think we have a long way to go but we have taken big steps so far in electing the GNC. We moved from a revolution, to a war, to the first steps of forming a country in one year. The whole world didn't expect such a thing with all the militias loose in Libya." Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"Having elections meant that we took the first step in the right direction. We might make some mistakes now, but we are moving forward because we can no longer be imprisoned for having opinions or opposing anyone. That era is over." Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"I think our advantage right now is that people are more active and more involved in what is happening in the country. The revolution taught the people not to hold back from speaking against the government if they make a bad decision." Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"The establishment of civil society organizations is a positive sign. They played an important role in raising the people's awareness on their rights, especially their political rights." Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"The Libyan people now enjoy our political rights, especially the civilian rights in choosing who represents us. We never had this before." Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"When I see the national congress working, it makes me feel that things are better than before. This makes me hope for the best." Woman, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, non-voter

However, many participants – even those who enthusiastically claim the country is headed in the right direction – complain that progress is too slow. There is frustration that the transition is not progressing more quickly and that the GNC is not organized or capable enough to manage the country's current challenges. Participants describe a growing lawlessness and express concern over deteriorating security conditions.

"It's not as if the government doesn't know what the problems are. Everyone does – the weapons, the militias, the problems in the streets. It's been over a year since the revolution ended. Why isn't anyone doing anything to fix these problems?" Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"They broke into the GNC yesterday or the day before. That kind of stuff makes you feel, without wanting to, that Libya won't develop. I mean you are trying to establish a government and then someone is breaking into it? They are creating chaos." Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"The country is still not organized—there is so much that needs to be done, but it isn't happening now and I don't understand why." Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

Despite the optimism and hope for the future expressed by participants, some respondents from throughout the country believe Libya is headed in the wrong direction. **These participants cite deteriorating security conditions, the absence of public services, and a sense of squandered political momentum, as dangerous for their country's future.** Many participants claim that the transition has yet to deliver on the promises of the revolution, in terms of both political transformation and improvements to daily life.

“I refuse to say that we are going on the right track. For me I believe nothing has changed in Libya and I know that every revolution has its positives and negatives and that the negatives are always a lot more. I don't like what's going on now in Libya.” Woman, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“Libya is without law. We can't even compare ourselves to Egypt that has an army and a constitution. We have nothing. No constitution and no army, so how will we succeed?” Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“When we were at war, my spirits were so high, I was so optimistic, but now it's not like that. I hate living like this. Things are headed in the wrong direction. I personally think we need another revolution.” Woman, Benghazi, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“There are weapons everywhere and there is no development anywhere. Sure, there are some positives, but right now I feel that the negatives are more than the positives.” Woman, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, non-voter

Many participants argue that the current Libyan context is too complicated to be cast as moving in the right or wrong direction and that the reality lies somewhere in between.

“I believe [the country] is going in the wrong direction over the short term, but right over the long term. The revolution as a whole was the right thing to do, but you can certainly ask questions about the leadership since then.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“Things won't fix so quick, there are both positive and negative things going on. For example, there is freedom and you can express yourself. However, weapons are still there and that is a negative point.” Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

Participants have mixed opinions over whether Libya's emerging protest culture is benefiting or hindering the transition. Some respondents see participation in public demonstrations as a civic responsibility and vital act of self-expression that honors the goals of the revolution and forces politicians to respect popular will.

“One of the positive factors I see is the fact that people are practicing their freedom of speech very effectively. In other words their voice is reaching the GNC and we see this in the increase of protests. They want to set a law that

prevents protesting but I think protesting is very positive and this proves that people are starting to be aware of what is happening, are giving their voice and are reacting towards what is happening." Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Others are discouraged by the frequent sight of armed protestors confronting the GNC. They want their fellow citizens to recognize the monumental challenges facing Libya's new leaders and be patient with the pace of change.

"Some civilians understood the definition of the word freedom in a very wrong way. The way people reacted towards the GNC by busting into their headquarters was unacceptable because, despite some issues, the Congress is the legitimate body in our country." Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"The lack of patience in the Libyan people is what causes me the greatest fear. They protest about anything that happens." Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

"Civilians should give their ideas to the people who they elected instead of pressuring them impatiently to do everything right now." Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"In Libya everyone is very critical. If a minister is chosen, they'll call him a thief, another minister they'll say he worked for the old regime. They don't want to wait, they want everything right away." Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"I hope the people become more patient. They waited for Gaddafi 42 years, but now they can't wait a year more for anything to change." Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

Participants rarely consider the government responsible for any positive developments in the current situation. **Nearly unanimously, they give credit to the Libyan people for carrying out the revolution and maintaining stability in the absence of effective governing and security institutions.**

"The citizens themselves are responsible for the positive things now. Before we even had a GNC it was the citizens who were moving the situation forward." Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"In my personal opinion, it was the people's love for their country and their desire for the country to move forward that made the elections so successful." Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"The people got us here, the freedom fighters and anyone who participated in the revolution." Woman, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

There is considerable disappointment that the elected GNC is failing to distinguish itself from the appointed National Transitional Council (NTC) by not proactively confronting key concerns, including the proliferation of weapons. In discussing Libya's current challenges, participants broadly consider the GNC and transitional government responsible for the transition's shortcomings, particularly concerning security.

“One big negative is the security. There is a lack of effort by the GNC and the NTC before them. The GNC has not done much about security at all. They are to blame.” Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“If you take a look at a negative such as the lack of security, this leads back to the government. It's important for the government to provide security.” Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“We had the elections so that we could put people in charge to fix our problems. The GNC was supposed to be different from the NTC. This is not the case.” Woman, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

The presence of perceived Gaddafi loyalists and former regime officials in the GNC and government ministries hinders public confidence in governing institutions. Consistent with findings from focus groups conducted in April 2012, some participants believe Libya's current struggles can be attributed to remnants of the former regime attempting to undermine the transition. They believe Gaddafi loyalists, either from outside Libya or from protected places of power in the new administration, will continue to obstruct Libya's development.

“There are still Gaddafi loyalists and we need another revolution to get rid of these people. When we try to move forwards some people are holding us back and it feels as though this is being done by those Gaddafi loyalists. When we get rid of the loyalists then the revolution will succeed.” Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“Supporters of the previous regime are planning to push us backwards. The election was too early because the anti-Gaddafi people and those that are pro-Gaddafi had the right to vote equally. Now members of the GNC are sitting next to shameful Gaddafi supporters.” Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

II. Security and Rule of Law

Security concerns are the most significant indicators cited by participants in all cities as evidence that the country is headed in the wrong direction. Participants claim that the hard-won victories of the revolution are baseless without security to protect their new rights and freedoms. Even participants who are optimistic for Libya's future claim that stability depends on the government's ability to control the flow of weapons, rein in disparate militias, establish an army, strengthen the police, secure the country's borders, and help people feel safe in their homes and neighborhoods.

"Before the revolution there was security, but there was no freedom. Now, however, there is freedom but there's no security. There is no law to protect us." Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"I don't feel safe – I don't think there is any security in the country now." Woman, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"If security is not restored, then no one will be able to govern Libya." Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"The main problem facing Libya is having a strong army and strong police department. If we watched the GNC yesterday, we could see that they cannot even provide protection for themselves. No hospital, airport, or any sector of this country will function right without protection and safety." Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"Security is paramount; we have to work on that. Government and all that come later on. Without security no one will work, without it we won't move forward." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

"If you have security everything else will follow. Companies will open in the country and start working as long as they feel secure." Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

The proliferation of weapons throughout the country is the key cause for concern among most participants. They see pervasive weapons as an immediate danger to their lives and families, as well as a threat to longer-term stability in Libya. The government is seen as responsible for collecting weapons but incapable of doing so. Many participants, particularly women in Sabha and Zintan, complain about an increase in recreational shooting by young men with weapons. They describe living in fear of the growing lawlessness in their communities.

"Before talking about how you can provide security you have to answer how you can possibly do this when there are weapons everywhere?" Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"For me the biggest problem that needs to be solved right now in Libya is collecting the weapons. The government is responsible for this, but they can't do anything." Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"Today I was with my father in the car and someone next to us had a Kalashnikov outside the car and started shooting in the air." Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"Now at night we hear gunshots as they are shooting randomly as if they are playing a game. We know they are drunk and you are afraid that a random

bullet will kill your children.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“The only good thing that Gaddafi did is that you would not hear a single bullet being fired. If you did fire a bullet, you would be fined for it and put in prison. But now there are no laws so people shoot as much as they want.” Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

Some participants believe that weapons should not be collected until the government is able to demonstrate some capacity to protect its citizens and claim that the volatile political landscape is even more justification for holding onto their weapons. Conversely, participants in focus groups conducted in April 2012 were near unanimous in their desire for the government to collect weapons.

“I am against collecting the weapons because I see the weapons benefiting Misrata. They keep us safe.” Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“I don’t think weapons are the biggest problem. If we hand in our weapons what makes you sure that the pro-Gaddafi forces wouldn’t use their own weapons against us? How are we supposed to defend ourselves then?” Woman, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“I will hold on to my weapons until we find out where the GNC is going.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“The main reason for the presence of militias is that some tribes or some cities have not handed back their weapons. The reason for this is because there is no one to hand them to, no legitimate person or department.” Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

Many participants believe that a well-trained army and competent police force could solve Libya’s security challenges by absorbing disparate militias and helping citizens feel safe in their communities.

“We hope they establish the army and the police soon. Then we could feel safe.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“I think we should have police and army forces that are trustworthy to solve our problems.” Woman, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“Building an army would solve all our problems, starting with the collection of all the weapons and guarding the borders.” Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

While participants are adamant that they need a strong police force to protect their neighborhoods, public confidence in police is very low. Participants see police as untrained, ill-equipped, and in many cases, afraid of militias and criminals. Some

respondents describe witnessing local police forces being intimidated by neighborhood militias. Others say local militias are more effective in providing security.

"They have nightly police patrols here, but when they go out they get shot at. It happened the other day. It is like the people don't want the country to settle down." Woman, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, non-voter

"They should motivate the policemen; raise their spirits in any way possible. Raise their salaries, anything to make them feel as though they're needed. Otherwise they will ask themselves why should I stand and get shot at at checkpoints?" Woman, Benghazi, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"Police officers don't really get much respect. To be honest I feel safer when I see young civilians protecting the neighborhood." Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Despite believing that the government is responsible for protecting its citizens, few participants have confidence in the government's capacity to strengthen or organize security forces or to enforce laws. The security landscape is chaotic and confusing to participants. Many participants claim that in the absence of government action, neighborhood volunteers, revolutionaries, tribal forces, and local militias are providing security. While some participants describe these local initiatives with pride, there is a clear desire to move away from these ad-hoc efforts.

"Of course the government must provide security. I mean, what is the role of the government if it doesn't provide safety?" Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"The government should provide the security. It should not be the militias imposing it on citizens." Woman, Zintan, 18-35, less than secondary education, voter

"The government should provide security, but right now under these circumstances every area is protected by its freedom fighters." Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

"It is mostly the citizens themselves who are providing security. We can't blame the government too much as they are still new at this." Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"A lot of people are just volunteers. Until now they help to secure our city. The civilians are responsible for security because so far they don't have complete trust in the people in charge." Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"Security is the responsibility of the GNC. After all if it is not their responsibility then why did we elect them in the first place?" Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

Participants have mixed opinions over the roles of militias, but most want them to be disarmed and either disbanded or absorbed into a national, trained army. Militias include both groupings of former freedom fighters and armed gangs who emerged after the revolution. Some participants describe living in fear of militias that control their cities, undercut the authority of local officials, conduct arbitrary raids, and unlawfully seize property. Ultimately, they want local security to be provided by an empowered, trained local police force. However, some participants argue that the militias are essential to preserve order and they should not be disbanded until the country is more stable.

“These are militia groups that have personal goals and wear the mask of the revolution and the revolutionaries. This isn't just creating a problem in Misrata but in many other parts of the country as well.” Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“Here in Derna we had militias that took part in the revolution. The government wants to dissolve them. I don't see this as a good move as some of these militias are protecting the city. I mean how do you want to dissolve the militias first if you don't have a well-established army? They are not the best solution but they did provide some form of security.” Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“There needs to be an agreement for the militias to smoothly dissolve and join the army.” Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“They should not disband the militias. We need them to provide security in the country until things are back to normal.” Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“We need army and a police, but right now they can't start working because armed groups could easily attack them. We hope this will change.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

III. Economic and Governance Challenges

Economic Concerns

Participants describe frustration with rising prices and persistent unemployment. Public discussion of Libya's oil wealth and Gaddafi's frozen assets has led to confusion over why the public is not reaping the benefits of the country's supposed riches. In the absence of information on public spending, particularly concerning oil revenues, many participants assume that corruption is taking place.

“We still have the same corruption that we saw in the old regime. Nothing has changed. We know we are a rich country, but where is our money? There is

administrative corruption and budgets are being stolen." Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"Unemployment is the biggest problem and it is the government's fault." Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"Now poverty is spreading even more than before. Where are the billions of dollars that we are supposed to have?" Woman, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"I am a university graduate and there are no jobs. I just sit at home." Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

"There is corruption. We hear money is being spent but we see nothing come from it." Woman, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"It doesn't make sense that we are rich like the other countries with money, but there are still people that get paid only 130 Libyan Dinars per month. This doesn't make sense to me." Woman, Benghazi, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

Participants blame unemployment for an uptick in illegal drug and alcohol use, particularly among the country's idle youth. They link the lack of opportunities for young people to an increase in petty crime.

"Drugs are everywhere now. The youth have nothing to do, no jobs, nothing. Maybe that's why they're using drugs. They want to get away from reality because their reality is hell." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

"The biggest problem I face personally is crime. I leave the house not knowing if I'll find my car downstairs." Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"People didn't use to drink, at least publicly. Now you can easily find alcohol in the streets. What is worse is that you can find drunk people with weapons." Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

Some participants complain that although the revolution is over, the country still operates in "crisis mode," with no visible progress in key areas such as health and education. Particularly in the less developed south, participants are also concerned about deteriorating services, including regular water and electricity shortages.

"Electricity has been cut off for some time now. Also the water gets cut off from time to time. The electricity shortages, poor roads, lack of jobs, schools, and education in general all have to improve. Everything has to improve." Woman, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, non-voter

“The hospitals are really bad. It is shameful that we have to go to Tunis for our healthcare.” Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“How can it be that the revolution has been over for months, over a year now, and things are still so bad? Our streets have broken buildings that were bombed during the war. Our schools and hospitals are terrible. When will we start to build?” Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Regional Identity and Government Accountability

The strong sense of national unity expressed by participants in focus group research conducted in November 2011 is being eclipsed by the assertion of competing regional identities to counter concerns over government centralization in Tripoli. Some participants lament growing divisions between the East and the West. Others, particularly respondents in the south and smaller cities outside of Tripoli, describe feeling marginalized and ignored by decision makers in their country’s capital.

“The South is the base of everything in Libya. The South is rich in gas, oil, and water. The East and West should show us more respect especially seeing as they are drinking our water and using our gas and oil. When there were water and electricity cuts in Tripoli the whole media was covering it. But when the same thing was happening here, nobody cared.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“When we want anything, we have to go all the way to Tripoli. Centralization is not allowing us to do anything.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

“From my point of view living in Zintan, we have been left out. We were left out before and we still are now. The only connections we have to the rest of the country are the electricity lines. No one takes care of anything, from the gutters to the education and the healthcare.” Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“There is a great sensitivity between the East and the West and this is really alarming. Suddenly discrimination grew.” Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“There are wars to gain power of the country. Suddenly one town wants more than another town and they create problems.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

Some participants complain about a growing disconnect between people and the government. Participants say they had hoped the elected GNC would set a precedent for constructive, two-way relationships between citizens and elected leaders. Instead, they describe frustration that the government is operating in isolation and failing to reach out to or consider the needs of the people that elected them. Focus group research conducted in November 2011 and April 2012 revealed significant

dissatisfaction with the NTC's lack of transparency and its failure to communicate with citizens. In the most recent round of focus groups, participants are clearly disappointed that the GNC has not learned from the mistakes of its predecessor institution.

“I think a problem is that there is no trust between the government and the Libyan people. I feel we're not working together. Only negative things can come from this.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

“There is a gap between the government and the people.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“The main negative thing I see is that there is a gap between the GNC and the people. We are not seeing any link or communication between the people and the GNC. What is really frustrating me is that those members of the GNC are supposed to be representing us, the Libyan people. But we feel far from them.” Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Confusion over the responsibilities and authority of local councils translates into mixed assessments of their performance, consistent with findings from focus groups conducted in November 2011 and April 2012. Regardless of city, participants complain about not having information on the roles or activities of the local council. In Derna and Misrata, participants describe their local councils as inactive, powerless, and constrained by a lack of support and funding from the central government. Participants in Tripoli criticize their local council for being poorly organized and chaotic. In Zintan, respondents explain that local volunteers are providing services instead of the council, which is broadly seen as irrelevant and ineffective. In Benghazi, participants express disappointment that their May 2012 local elections did not result in improved services for their city.

In Sabha, Tripoli, and Zintan – cities that have not yet held local elections – participants complain that their appointed local councils lack legitimacy. While participants from Derna and Misrata – cities that recently elected local councils – were slightly more forgiving and willing to show patience, frustration and criticism of the councils were common themes in all cities.

“There is no organization. It's a mess. It's useless. I don't even know who they are. They should first present themselves and tell us what they are planning to do.” Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“I think it's too early to judge our local council as they started on August 20. For me personally, I think it is taking slow steps forwards.” Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“The local council has done nothing. I see no change.” Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“First of all, we have not elected the local council. They were placed in their position [by the NTC] to deal with the crisis. They are corrupt. We have protested

against them and have done everything we can but there is no point.” Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“The local council has not delivered anything new. This is because they have no experience in doing this and no money. People are fed up of just listening to them with nothing happening.” Woman, Benghazi, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“They should first get our permission as I don’t know who put them there as our local council.” Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“The local council was elected by people, but I must be frank the local council in Misrata is not performing their functions the way they should. I think they were shocked when they took charge because it was a harder job than they thought.” Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

Participants in all cities assert that councils should help solve local problems, provide basic services, and serve as effective intermediaries between citizens and the national government. Participants want local councils to share information and be transparent with citizens about plans and programs to improve their cities.

“They should take care of the people, if there’s no electricity, if I face a problem on my street. They are the closest people to me. I can’t go straight to the government. The local council is my connection to them. They are supposed to go to the government and speak on my behalf.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“They are supposed to take care of the area they represent and solve problems in that area.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“It is hard to say what they should be doing as there is a lack of communication. They should come out and tell us what is going on.” Woman, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

There is near consensus among participants that power is more effectively held and exercised by individuals and groups with access to weapons. Participants rarely view political actors as powerful, and instead express concern that armed groups, some with extremist or unclear political agendas, are manipulating citizens and seeking to undermine the transition.

“The people with the guns have the power now in Libya. They are groups that are stirring people against each other using rumors. I feel that these groups are controlling the street as they like, leaving the people in dreams that they had a glorious revolution, while they are taking over the country.” Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“The extremists have weapons. I think they’re powerful.” Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"Militias are the ones with the real power." Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"The people with the real power are the ones with the weapons." Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

IV. Elections

Participants are proud and enthusiastic about their country's historic July 7, 2012 national elections. Respondents in all cities describe the excitement of participating in Libya's first democratic elections in decades, with many participants comparing the experience to the Islamic holy day of Eid or to a wedding celebration.

"It was a very happy time for everyone, as it was our first experience in voting." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

"It was like Eid to us. It was one of the happiest days we have ever experienced." Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"I am over 30 years of age, but this is the first time I witness elections. I see the elections as a positive step and award it a rating of 100 percent." Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"It went farther than our expectations. It was great, perfect." Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"It was perfect in every aspect. Once I placed my vote I felt we were taking our first steps towards change. It was a cause of optimism." Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

Most participants proudly describe the elections as organized and well-administered. They broadly see them as free of fraud, noting that they observed no attempts at manipulation. Some point to the presence of national and international election observer as indicators that the process was fairly conducted. They also recount the novelty of casting a secret ballot and the right to freely choose their representatives after 42 years of dictatorship and repression.

"I think the Libyan people showed that they have what it takes to be orderly and responsible. I think it was really quite impressive to see how smooth the elections were and how people were organized in queues without any trouble, especially taking into account that this was the first election in the country for more than 40 years." Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"No one thought Libya would reach this level, and that it would be this successful." Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“They were very successful and that is not just by our evaluation but also that of the United Nations, international organizations, and by the Arab world. In truth the elections exceeded my expectations.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“You voted in secret, so even your family members were free to vote for anyone they wanted. You could vote for someone and your children could vote for others.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

Some participants, particularly women, note they felt safe and encouraged by the visible security presence at polling sites. Many respondents say the elections defied their expectations of election day violence.

“When the elections took place, security increased. I felt it became safer than other days.” Woman, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, non-voter

“We were optimistic regarding elections but a little frightened in terms of security and safety, but it ended up better than we expected.” Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“I was expecting the worst, such as a bomb in voting areas. I was glad and impressed how the process went smoothly without trouble.” Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“I was glad to see the security departments and patrols protecting the ballot boxes.” Woman, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Some participants – even those who view the elections positively – criticize the process for its compressed timeframe and difficulty accessing information on candidates, political parties, and the voting process itself. Many respondents describe confusion over the array of candidates and political parties, blaming the Libyan media for not informing people about their options.

“We did not have enough information on the candidates and their CVs. Even though we had ballots, I saw people just voting randomly without really knowing the person they were voting for.” Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“The media was not doing its job well and most people were unaware of what they were voting for or what was going on.” Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“I didn’t really know what I was doing. There was a lot of paper and the supervisor hurried me to vote.” Woman, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“The elections went smoothly and successfully, but there should have been a better mechanism for introducing candidates and presenting their CVs because we had some people who wanted to vote for someone without knowing

anything about them. I think media didn't play a good role in improving the awareness of people when it came to introducing and presenting candidates.” Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“Before the elections they gave a week or so for the candidates to advertise themselves, to sell themselves to the people. This isn't enough time for the people to choose correctly.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

Candidates and political parties receive considerable criticism for weak campaigns that failed to inform the public about their policies and platforms.

“The candidates for the elections did not have good campaigns for promoting their programs. They should have interacted with the people more. It is not enough to just state you have a certificate from a certain university. They should speak on the radio, hold seminars and interact with the people more.” Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“The campaigns were not good because they didn't help people understand the candidates or their plans.” Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Respondents argue that more time was needed to help Libyans – most of whom had never had any exposure to electoral processes – understand the mechanics, purpose, and basic principles of an election. Some participants claim that they went to the polls unsure of the mandate of the GNC and the duties of its members.

“I think these elections weren't fair for the people. They were a success yes, in that for 42 years people knew nothing about elections and all that. However, it would have been better if they had held awareness campaigns and not had the elections explained to them only two weeks before they took place. The public didn't have a fair chance. It wasn't enough time for us to understand and make the right choice.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“We have no awareness; they should have explained what the elections were before they took place.” Woman, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“Some people went into the [polling station] and didn't know what to do. So they just ticked the first box or the last box.” Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“It was great for the whole of Libya, but they should have done a better job in raising the awareness among the people on the elections.” Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Participants relied mostly on television and, to a lesser extent, websites including Facebook and the website of the High National Election Commission (HNEC) for

information on the elections. Given limited Internet coverage outside of Benghazi and Tripoli, respondents broadly saw television and radio coverage as an effective source of information. Many participants also used candidate and political party signs and posters, as well as radio coverage to learn about the electoral process and the candidate and party options. Others claimed to get their information on the elections based on word of mouth from family members and friends. **There is a clear appetite for more interactive methods of information-sharing, including radio call-in shows and in-person campaign visits, to give people opportunities to ask questions and engage directly with candidates and political parties.**

"I got my information mostly from the Internet, either from the election commission website or from Facebook." Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"Not everyone has Internet. TV is the most powerful source of information." Woman, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"Our local radio channel had a program each night where they discussed the CVs of a couple of candidates." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

"I liked live interviews and phone calls from the people. Sometimes we had candidates talking, but then some citizens would call him during the program and point out his lies. These interventions showed who the liars were." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

"I didn't know much about the political parties and I didn't have a computer to research the topic but I called friends that I can trust and I asked them to give me a brief summary about each political party." Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Even those respondents who felt relatively well-informed exhibited a strong desire for more information about electoral processes and the candidate options. Participants who did not vote rated themselves the least informed, indicating potential opportunities for voter information campaigns to encourage participation in future elections.

"I think we understood the elections in a very general and simple way. We had a voting card, we went to the voting centers, voted, came back home, and that's it. I wish I had understood more." Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"The television was not very helpful during the elections. An event like this, a first time experience in a country coming out of crisis, the focus on the TV should be at least 70 percent on the elections. It was not." Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"I think there was a shortage of information on the elections in the media such as TV and newspapers." Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“I really didn’t know anything about the elections. The media should have explained the elections to the people better.” Woman, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, non-voter

Participants broadly see the July 7, 2012 elections as fair. They point to their own personal experience voting in well-administered polling stations, as well as to the presence of local and international election observers as enhancing their confidence in the outcome.

“The election was 100 percent fair.” Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“I was glad to see that nobody could cheat or commit fraud.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“It was honest and fair because there were monitors and organizations making sure it was fair. They were successful.” Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

The handful of participants, generally non-voters, who claim the elections were unfair are rarely able to point to specific instances of manipulation. Instead, they refer to rumors of vote-buying, voter manipulation, and a vague sense that the process was unduly influenced. Some claim that heads of families instructed their wives and children, while others express concern that elderly and illiterate voters were potentially manipulated to vote for certain individuals or parties.

“Some people sold their votes. They were selling their votes on the streets for 500 dinars. I didn’t see it, nor do I have proof, but that’s what I heard.” Woman, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, non-voter

“There was pressure on the people to vote for specific people. There was no forging of votes or anything, but I think there was a sense of directing them on who to vote for.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“There was some cheating. In an American family, for example, the father doesn’t tell his children who to vote for – it is almost like a secret. Here, people were told who to vote for.” Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“In the case of some elderly people, I felt as though they were told to go in and vote for so and so. I think raising more awareness for the elderly would have been better. If there had been an international observer in this center I am sure he would have made a big point out of it.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

“For me there was some manipulation over the results.” Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

The joy of participating in Libya's first democratic elections in decades is somewhat dampened by increasing frustration with a perceived lack of forward momentum since the elections. Some participants are concerned that the "wrong" people were elected. They complain that their new representatives are not qualified and that people voted based on emotional appeals instead of capabilities. Other participants are dismayed that Gaddafi loyalists and figures from the former regime are empowered again, this time as elected GNC representatives.

"The elections were excellent, but unfortunately the result wasn't very satisfying. We are shocked by some of these people. Do they know what they are doing?" Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"I think people voted based on their emotions, as it was their first time, rather than going to elect the most suitable candidate." Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"I am no longer sure the elections were a success. There are some people who were from the old regime who are now in the Congress." Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"The elections were fair, but the people they chose were not so good." Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

Voting

Most respondents participated enthusiastically in the elections. They claim they voted due to a sense of civic responsibility and to honor the principles of the revolution. Some participants state they voted to contribute to positive change in their country. Others assert that after decades of dictatorship followed by a year under the rule of a self-appointed transitional council that failed to bring about significant change, they cast their votes to choose the right people to lead the country during the next phase of the transition and to deliver improvements in security and public services. Others claim that the sheer novelty of voting in Libya's first democratic elections in decades inspired them to participate.

"By voting I helped contribute to the building of the country." Woman, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"I voted for change. To change things for the better." Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

"I voted for many reasons, one being that this is one of the first new things in Libya, we didn't have it before. When I voted, it meant I could finally taste freedom. I could be a part of the change that the winning candidate would bring to the country." Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“I voted for whom I believe are the right people for the job.” Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

Participants felt empowered by the act of voting. The claim to feel their votes made a difference, and some respondents state that voting made them feel as if they were exercising their fundamental rights and making their voices heard.

“If I vote for a person and he wins, I helped put him there. I have importance.” Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“I feel powerful when I vote. I was a part of Libya’s future.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

“I’m sure my vote made a difference. Everyone’s vote made a difference.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

Some participants intended but were unable to vote because of problems with their voter registration or because of logistical issues.

“There was a problem with my registration.” Woman, Benghazi, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“I wanted to vote, but I could not reach the [polling station] in time.” Woman, Benghazi, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“I left my registration card at my parents’ home in Benghazi.” Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“We didn’t vote because we couldn’t, not because we did not want to.” Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

Other participants made a conscious choice not to participate in the elections. In Misrata, some participants described the disappointment of participating in local elections that have failed to produce change. Non-voters in Benghazi tended to have abstained for political reasons. They explain that they are offended by the perceived marginalization of the East and state they did not vote due to dissatisfaction with the number of GNC seats allocated for Eastern constituencies.¹

“Some people felt they were wasting their time with the elections because they went and voted for the local council and nothing has changed.” Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“I was planning to vote—I even had the registration card and everything. But I wasn’t happy with the distribution of the seats and the government layout as a

¹ There are 200 seats in the GNC—the Western region including Tripoli and the Nafusa Mountains has 102 seats. The East, including Benghazi, has 60 seats. The South has 29, and the central region, including Sirte, has 9.

whole, so I didn't do it." Woman, Benghazi, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

Some participants claim they chose not to vote because they were unable to identify desirable candidates or political parties. They explain that they did not find the often outlandish campaign promises credible or, in some cases, were uncomfortable voting for candidates that they did not know personally.

"I didn't know who was better and what the differences were between the candidates." Woman, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, non-voter

"I like the fact that there were some people, although very few, who didn't vote. They said we won't vote for someone we don't know." Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"I didn't vote because the candidates need to have a certified and truthful CV. All the candidates said they had done so much and they would do so much more. I didn't believe them." Woman, Benghazi, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"I didn't vote because I wasn't convinced by anyone." Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

Women participants who did not vote in the elections generally cited family obligations or – particularly in Benghazi – fear over the potential for election day violence. Some claimed they never received information on the election and felt uncomfortable participating without understanding the process.

"My mother is ill and I could not leave her to go vote." Woman, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, non-voter

"To be honest, I didn't want to vote because I was scared. Many of us were scared because of the security issues, not because the elections wouldn't be fair or anything like that." Woman, Benghazi, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"I don't know, I have no idea how to vote and never really found out how." Woman, Benghazi, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"I was busy with my family and could not leave the house." Woman, Benghazi, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"Some people don't have time to think about elections. They haven't got time for it because they have to provide for their families." Woman, Benghazi, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

Voter Choices

Many participants claim to have selected candidates and political parties based on their qualifications and perceived ability to fulfill campaign promises and help move the country forward. Others claim to have chosen candidates based on patriotism, revolutionary credentials, or the specific programs a particular candidate or party offered. While many participants emphasize the importance of selecting qualified candidates, they also acknowledge the difficulty of judging competence when so few contenders have political experience.

“I tried to understand the role of the GNC and to choose people that I thought could play the role best.” Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“For me, a candidate’s experience is important. But this was a problem because most of them don’t have any experience.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

“My decision was based on candidate qualifications and their integrity.” Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“If I saw that a candidate or a party had the same view and thoughts as I did, that made me choose them.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“I voted for the candidate I thought loved his country, because if he does then he’ll always do the right thing.” Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“I voted for the person who had achievable goals as there were some with fantasy things I knew they wouldn’t do.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

Personal relationships influenced voter choices, and there is disagreement over whether this is a positive or negative trend. Some participants claimed to have voted for neighbors, community leaders, and other known figures. Some voters argue that it is important to personally know a candidate in order to judge their credibility. They assert that knowing a candidate ensured that they knew he or she was of good character and that, once elected, they would serve as an entry point to decision-making structures. Some of these participants claim that the compressed campaign timeframe pushed them to vote for people they already knew, as they did not have time to familiarize themselves with other candidates. Others, particularly those participants with higher education levels, complain that people voted for friends and neighbors instead of selecting the most qualified candidate and that such practices have no place in a modern democracy.

“I know the person I voted for, he’s a neighbor. I’ve worked with him, so I knew he deserved to win.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

“In the elections if it was your neighbor, brother or sister or whatever, that’s who they voted for. That’s not how it should be. The candidates are going to have a huge say in how the country is going to be run so you can’t give them that power just because you know them or because they’re close to you.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“We had no information about the candidates so we voted for the people that we knew.” Woman, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“It’s important to vote for people you know so you can have a representative in the GNC that knows you.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter
“Not having enough time forced the people to just vote based on their relationship with the candidates.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

Some participants believe that community reputation is an important factor in candidate selection and voted for recognizable figures of good repute that they knew were agreeable to the broader community. In explaining such choices, participants rationalize that relying on community consensus to vet candidates ensures that a figure will be acceptable to the rest of the community and beyond reproach.

“Our Libyan way is that we sit and discuss who is a good candidate and we support him. This is our way because we are still new to this election business.” Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“In terms of the individual candidates, for me it was about choosing someone that society accepts.” Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“My main criteria was the candidate’s reputation among the people. I’d rather hear what people say about you, rather than what you say about yourself.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

“The political party that won in Misrata won because the leader’s surname is a typical Misrati surname. They have offices all around Libya, but only won in Misrata for this obvious reason.” Woman, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Tribal allegiances influenced voting choices in the South. Some participants from Sabha acknowledge that they and their neighbors voted for candidates affiliated with or openly supported by their tribes. There is disagreement among these participants over whether tribal relationships should have played a role in the elections. Some argue that the only way to trust your representative is if he or she is accountable to the tribe. Others are frustrated with tribal traditions and believe that representatives should be elected on the basis of qualifications, not tribe.

"The election was organized, but voting wasn't right. It was all about what tribe you were from. If your family chooses a certain political party then you had to vote for this party as well." Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"People voted according to tribes and this is shameful." Woman, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, non-voter

"The main problem was the support shown by voters to tribal members, which didn't provide the best results." Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"Personally I would vote for someone on the basis of what they will do. Not because he is in my tribe, if I know he is useless then I won't vote for him." Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

Future Elections

Many respondents – both those who voted in July and those who refrained from participating – say they are likely to vote in future elections. These participants describe voting as an important right and responsibility of citizenship and assert that they have an obligation to their country to elect responsible leaders.

"Of course, I will vote in order to participate in choosing my representative." Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"I have a responsibility to vote, to choose the best people to move Libya towards even better things." Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"Even if you don't agree with the elections, you have to do this for your country. This is your job as a citizen here. Something that will help the county move forward is your duty." Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Others participants say that they are interested in voting in future elections, but feel they need more information, both on the electoral process itself as well as on candidate and political party options.

"I will vote, but I hope we will have better information in the future." Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"In the last elections I didn't know who to vote for. In the future, I will vote if I have better information on the candidates." Woman, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Some participants claim that they will not vote in future elections. They argue that the elections failed to deliver meaningful change to their daily lives or enhance their

confidence in the country's transition process. Others state that they will consider participating in future elections only if Libya's new leaders are able to demonstrate some capacity and follow through on their campaign promises. **Some participants say they will use the progress or failure of the GNC to determine whether they vote in future elections.**

"I'm not going to vote again in the future. My vote didn't have the effect I thought it would have. We're still a third world country. If we become more modern and improve the situation, then I will vote." Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"The outcomes of the GNC will either motivate us to vote again or not. If this experience ends up successful then yes we will vote again." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

"If the GNC members can do their job of ruling the country and making real change in the country then I would vote." Woman, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, non-voter

"It will depend on who is in front of us and do they deserve our voice. I will not choose the best from what is available - he will either be good enough in my mind or I won't participate. I think we have learned a lesson from our previous elections." Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"Next time I won't vote if I don't like the candidates. I won't repeat my mistake." Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Disillusionment with local government discourages future participation in local council elections. Some participants who affirm that they will participate in future national elections also state they have little interest in local elections. These participants claim that their local councils are irrelevant and incompetent.

"I would only vote for big elections. Local councils will never make a difference, but presidential elections and the new government, that's what I want to be a part of." Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"Yes, I'll vote, but for the government, not for Tripoli Council or anything like that." Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"If there are elections coming up, the only thing I'm voting for are the presidential elections, apart from that I'm not voting for anything else. Because we've had enough." Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Participants have high expectations for the next elections. Most participants say that the July 2012 polls were an important learning experience and a successful first run. They claim that future elections will be technically sound and free of problems.

“The next elections will be better, bigger too. We've learnt from our mistakes. We successfully passed this first test, I am sure we'll do great in the other ones.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

“There won't be any problems in the next elections.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“We experimented on the first one, next time it will be perfect.” Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

Others respondents say they share their fellow participants' hopes for successful future elections, but hope that election administrators will make greater efforts to inform the voting public. They want the election commission to undertake nationwide voter education campaigns and to provide voters with more time to learn about their choices and make informed decisions.

“There will be a huge responsibility for the people organizing the elections to educate the people and raise their awareness to make sure they don't make the same mistakes.” Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“They have to set it up right this time. For example, if the election is planned for April, you can start your awareness campaign from October or November. Educate me on who are the candidates, so I can study well the person I'm going to vote for.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

V. The General National Congress (GNC)

Many participants expected that the inauguration of a legislative body comprising elected, accountable representatives would help stabilize the country and lead to improvements in security and service delivery. In focus groups conducted in both April and November 2012, participants evinced a belief that once the elections were held, the country would be on the right track.

“Our dream was that all of this will improve once the GNC took over.” Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“The elections meant everything beneficial for the country, society, and for the people. It was supposed to bring better services in particular.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“I expected the people we elected to fix the country, to address all the problems we spoke about in the campaign.” Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

GNC Performance

Though unable to point to specific accomplishments, a handful of participants commend the GNC for being an elected and representative body instead of an appointed one. These participants see GNC members as undaunted by the country's current challenges and making concerted efforts to move the country forward.

"There has been a change and things have improved a small amount. The GNC is stronger, they come out more. They speak what they want." Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"Well I am proud to say that the people elected represent all aspects of society. I am glad that it's different than before when they used to represent certain tribes but now they represent everyone." Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

However, the vast majority of focus group participants are disappointed by the performance of the Congress. They claim that the GNC has yet to take action on key issues such as reining in the militias, drafting the constitution or stabilizing the economy. The GNC is near universally described as slow and inefficient. Some participants, particularly those in the South, express frustration that the people they elected are not adequately representing them.

"The only thing is that there is a legitimate body. Other than that it's completely useless and it's waste of time and will not provide anything. The proof lies before you. Nothing has changed – nothing has been achieved." Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"They could have done better. I have seen nothing, not one improvement. They just sit there and talk." Woman, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"I wish to see the people I voted for perform better. They are not as fast as we expected them to be. We want them to represent our voice and to play a better role sooner. I hoped to see in every session someone speaking from the south but so far they are inactive." Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

"It is not just about winning seats and sitting in them. If they can't do anything they should leave, because they have left us." Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

"Why did we elect these people? To set up a constitution, to provide security, safety, and to activate the institutions. How long has it been since they were elected? Three months? What we want from them is swiftness in making decisions and making things happen." Woman, Sabha, Over 35, secondary education or less, voter

"They are slow; I've noticed that the representatives from the South are not so active during the GNC sessions. They need to be more effective in their discussion and in defending the South's rights." Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

"These people should provide security, improve healthcare, just generally fix the country's problems, we have a lot of problems. Just talking about it in meetings is not going to help us." Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

The widely perceived lack of progress is eroding public confidence in the GNC. Participants describe the disappointment of feeling their representatives are more interested in titles, high salaries and political power than serving the people who elected them. Some participants chastise GNC members for being unprofessional and unprepared to perform their legislative, representative, and oversight functions.

"I think they went power crazy, and forgot about the people who voted for them." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

"All of this is piling up and leading us to slowly start distrusting the government and the GNC. So far they haven't showed us anything for us to trust them." Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

"I feel some of the members of the GNC are making decisions based on personal gains. I am surprised because we elected them to represent us." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

"What do you expect from people who, the first thing after the election of their head of the Assembly, discuss their salaries? The first thing they discussed was their salaries! This is unbelievable. An injured country that has 30,000 martyrs and 60,000 wounded. People believed in them, trusted them, voted for them. What do you expect us to think?" Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"We were very sad to see the members asking for very high salaries during their first ever discussion. They should be working as volunteers." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

"They turned out to be power hungry and they want money." Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

Participants had high expectations for change following the elections and are disappointed that their new leaders have failed to deliver improvements to local services and stabilize the security situation. Given the Gaddafi regime's nepotistic system of rewarding unqualified people with influential government positions, it is unsurprising that many participants voted in the elections to choose "the right" people. Participants are now frustrated that those "right" people are not making visible progress.

"Now there is no reason not to get things back in order including courts, reconstructing the institutions, rebuilding them. Now the elections have been held there is no reason for some of these institutions to not be working." Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"After the election the country was supposed to settle down." Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"So far nothing has changed." Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

The GNC is seen as chaotic and poorly organized. Some participants claim the members are openly disrespectful toward one another and more interested in arguing than in negotiating solutions to the complicated problems facing the country. Some participants wish their representatives were more polished, noting they feel embarrassed that the GNC members are representing Libya on the global stage.

"People sacrificed their lives so they could sit where they're sitting, how can you talk and act like that?" Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

"They are very unorganized and unprofessional in their sessions. They need rules to organize them." Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

"I don't like their performance or their actions or how they talk. They have no respect in the way they talk. Their meetings are shameful. The attendance is a disgrace too." Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

"They represent Libya to the world so they should look much better." Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

"During the first meeting in the GNC, it was clear that the members didn't even know what was going on. They're not organized. They just talk on the phones and walk around." Woman, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Participants note with dismay a rising trend of absenteeism among their newly elected representatives. They are shocked that GNC members would choose not to attend sessions or leave Libya for personal business when the country is so fragile. Some participants suggest legal measures to enforce attendance.

"Take yesterday as an example where Dr. Ali Zidane was going to present his government. Did you see how unorganized they were. You had members away on Hajj and 13 members in Canada. They should establish rules to organize themselves and respect the sessions." Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

"I think they are terrible, they show no respect for times. During most of the conference meetings more than half are not present. I don't think they are

taking it seriously. If I'm a civilian watching TV and find out that one third of them are not present they should come out on to the media and explain why this is happening.” Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“You see when the meeting starts, people stand up to leave, and they start telling them to get back to their seats. It shows they don't want to be there and that the others are pressuring them to stay.” Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“Sixty members went on Hajj, and I was told that twelve went to Canada and about ten to England. Unfortunately, if I do the math, then fifty to sixty percent of the GNC that represents Libya is not in Libya at the hardest time!” Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“The GNC is asking for a lot of services such as cars and bodyguards. What services have they given in return? I mean some of them don't even attend the sessions, or they are always coming in and going out.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

While some participants are still willing to show patience to the GNC, more communication and transparent decision-making are critical if Libyans are to feel more confident that the GNC is making progress on important issues. Without information from the GNC, participants are making their own assumptions about how the GNC is operating.

“For me, they are making the same mistakes as the transitional council.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

“They lack transparency as their most important meetings are done behind closed doors.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

“There is a lot of money being spent and the details are unknown regarding this money.” Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“They cannot be blamed for everything but they should at least make an effort to go to the street and explain what is happening.” Woman, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Currently the GNC broadcasts some of its sessions on television and radio. Participants have mixed opinions over whether sessions of the Congress should be televised. **After years of being denied access to decision-making structures, some participants are encouraged by the televising of sessions, claiming it provides them with an unprecedented opportunity to see their representatives in action and better understand how the Congress functions.** They argue that it helps them to better understand the challenges facing the GNC and encourages them to be more understanding of delays. Conversely, other participants claim to find the televised sessions frustrating because it exposes how disorganized and poorly prepared the members are.

"The good thing about having their meetings broadcast is that we know why the delay is happening. We know what problems they're going through, it is better than us being in the dark. The conflicts that are happening are live in front of us." Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"It is a disgrace. It is as if they were at school, the way they talk and work. These are the people we voted for, what a disgrace! They should appoint a spokesperson because it is embarrassing seeing them with all their conflicts on TV." Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"I don't like how they talk. They should have their meetings closed so that no one can see or hear them." Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

While criticism of the GNC is widespread, a handful of participants recognize the challenges facing the Congress and are willing to show patience. They argue that GNC members have no prior legislative experience and have been given considerable responsibilities during a fraught transitional period. These participants urge their fellow citizens to be patient with the GNC and give them more time to acclimate to their roles and begin delivering results.

"They started from zero and are carrying the responsibility of the whole country. It's very hard." Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"The GNC has only been working for a little time, so it's unfair to evaluate their work now, it's too soon. We can't evaluate them so quickly. I'm not defending their failure, but we can't judge them this soon either." Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"We must remember that it's a first experience for them too. But we the people are not supporting them at all." Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"I sympathize with the members of the GNC because they are in a very tough position, they are trying but it is hard." Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

Lack of understanding of the GNC's mandate and the roles and responsibilities of the Congress frequently translate into a contradictory mix of high expectations and dissatisfaction with the body's performance. Many participants are frustrated by the lack of public services and what they perceive as a stalling transition process. Unsure of the exact roles and responsibilities of the GNC, participants say the Congress should provide security, draft or oversee the drafting of the constitution, establish rule of law, develop the economy, provide employment opportunities, improve health, education and service delivery, and continue moving the country forward politically.

"I expect them to fix a lot of things – education, healthcare, sewers, all that stuff." Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"They are supposed to establish good administration. To punish anyone who breaks the law. To make people work more efficiently." Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"It is the GNC's responsibility to provide proper security." Woman, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"The GNC has to draft the constitution that will unite Libya. To must take Libya from better to better." Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"They are supposed to build the country in the right away and find solutions for our problems." Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"The GNC is supposed to find our youth job opportunities." Woman, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

There is a waning tolerance for rhetoric. Participants feel this is a critical period in Libya's transition and that they need strong, capable leaders to deliver tangible change.

"If you go tell the people that you are going to do so and so, and then when you are elected you do the opposite, that means you are a traitor, and that you don't understand democracy." Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"People are sick of hearing things and then nothing is being done. We need change, not just words." Woman, Benghazi, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"They have to stop talking and start doing. They must improve even a small part of the troubles we are living with." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

Representation and Constituent Engagement

Many participants identify carrying the voices of ordinary citizens to the government and advocating on their behalf as key functions of the GNC. Some participants caution the GNC against the dangers of forgetting the people who elected them.

"I expected them to communicate the voice of the people that voted for him, or the voice of their city, for example Zintan. The most important job of a GNC member should be to communicate the voices of the people." Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"As a citizen I should communicate with the members of the GNC from my city and tell them my ideas so they can communicate them." Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“Violence is the voice of the unheard. If you overlook a group of people and don’t give them a chance, they will unite and cause problems because their voice is unheard by the people in charge they have elected.” Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Some participants, mostly those who had voted in the elections, were familiar with and able to name their GNC representatives. **Although participants in all cities expressed interest in contacting their representatives for help, some respondents were concerned that their GNC members would not be able to help them solve problems.** They said they would be willing to contact their representatives if they could be convinced some good would come of it. Participants who did not vote in the elections were less likely to express interest in contacting their GNC members.

“If I knew where he was and if I knew he would help me and be useful, I would go to my representative.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“He should have an office here in Zintan for us to come visit him.” Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“Yes, I would like to go to the GNC members for Derna for problems concerning our area or neighborhood.” Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“All of us would go to him if they were useful, but let’s be serious. Most of us don’t know who the GNC members are.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

There is little confidence in the capacity of GNC members to help their constituents. Some participants see no utility in reaching out to their representatives, preferring to rely on their families and communities to solve problems. They claim that GNC members are already overburdened or ill-equipped to help the people they represent. **Reinforcing participants’ value of personal relationships in politics, some respondents claimed that they would approach GNC members who they knew personally, even from other cities, before they would contact the members elected from their constituency.** They believe that they could accomplish more working through friends and neighbors than by contacting their own representatives.

“There is no chance for you to go talk to your representatives because they are already busy with their own challenges.” Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“I would go see my cousin who is a member of the GNC.” Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“If they were useful I would go, but I know they’re all useless.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“I shouldn't have to go look for my representative – he should come to see us.”
Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

Many participants claimed they would like to reach out to their representatives, but did not know how. They describe feeling abandoned by the people they empowered to represent them. Some respondents hoped that their members would establish local offices and proactively reach out to citizens.

“They don't have offices here; there is no means of communication. We can't reach them.” Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“We have no idea how to reach our members.” Woman, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“I think there should be a method or a place where I can go and see my representative, but if we don't know where, then we can't go, can we?”
Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“We have to protest to reach to them.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

“How will we contact them? When you vote for someone they are supposed to take care of you and deal with your issues, but we can't contact them and tell them.” Woman, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, non-voter

Women GNC Members and Women's Political Participation

Participants, particularly women, are proud of the election of 33 women to the GNC.² They reference the significant contributions of Libyan women to the revolution and believe it is important that women continue to play roles in the country's governing institutions. Many participants claim women have leadership capacity and that they should enjoy the right to participate in the Congress as elected representatives. Participants describe 33 elected women as a “good start” and hope to increase women's representation in future elections.

“There should be more. Women played a strong part during the revolution, and so should have a bigger part in the government.” Woman, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“I think it should be 50/50.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“There should be more women because women do have an important role to play.” Woman, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

² The GNC now contains 32 women members, as one was disqualified by the Integrity and Patriotism Commission.

“We must have women in the Congress. I am happy with the number of women – it is a major step forwards. In the future we will have more but for now it is okay.” Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Other participants, particularly men, express discomfort with women participating as elected representatives of the GNC. They believe that women do not have the capacity to serve in leadership positions or that they should be relegated to the fields of education and health. Some male participants state they do not believe that a woman could represent them, but that they are confident Libyan women could be represented by male Congress members. Others point to the fact that 32 of the 33 women elected were voted in on a quota system³ as evidence that the country is not yet ready to elect women.

“If the people really wanted women, they would have voted for them.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“You shouldn’t vote for women.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“Women have the right to have someone to represent them. They are represented by their husband or son. She has the right to vote though.” Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“From the 120 [individual seats], only one woman from Bani Walid was voted for—that speaks for itself.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“The female members have an important role to play as they represent the voice of women in the GNC. Women can play a positive role in education and health.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“I don’t support that, I don’t support the idea that women can represent me.” Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“I’m not really with having women in the government. Thirty-three is a lot. Men are enough for me.” Woman, Benghazi, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

Other participants criticize the performance of women members of the GNC and claim that their shortcomings are proof that women should not be involved in Libya’s new governing institutions. They describe women GNC members as unqualified and inefficient. While these are generally the same complaints applied to their male counterparts, some participants tend to ascribe the perceived inadequacies of women GNC members to their gender.

³ Libya’s election law required parties to alternate between men and women both horizontally and vertically meaning men and women’s names would alternate within each individual list, and every other list proposed by the party was required to begin with a woman.

"I think the role of women should be greater and with better-qualified women. Some of the women in the GNC are weak." Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"I'm very happy that so many women are a part of the GNC, but not every woman in the assembly is doing her job." Woman, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"I don't think they are playing a big role so far in the GNC. Libyan women are too shy." Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

"We haven't seen anything from the women GNC members, but we haven't exactly seen much from the men either." Woman, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Some participants – including women – claim that women are too emotional and weak to adequately handle the stresses of political life. They express concern that women representatives are too beholden to family responsibilities to be effective in politics and that they lack the flexibility of their male counterparts. They claim that women in politics are more interested in petty conflicts than supporting other women. Many male participants claim that women do not have a proven track record, nationally or globally, of successful leadership and that this proves they are not capable of navigating the complicated contours of Libya's political transition.

"Women can hold the same responsibilities that men do, but our culture doesn't help us much because we can't call women at 2:00 AM and tell them to come to the office for an emergency." Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"Sadly because of our culture, a women that is strong, qualified, intellectual and right for this job is hard to come by." Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"Women use their emotions too much, they can't make wise decisions, with all due respect to women." Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"Women should support each other. Right now men are supporting women more than women are supporting each other." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

"I think Libyan women are shy, our culture isn't very supportive of them." Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"I think women should have rights but when it comes to holding a position of power, I disagree." Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

Despite resistance to women's political engagement, some participants – men and women – do express more general support for women's participation. Those participants point to the unique strengths and capacities of Libyan women, while others say that qualifications and competence are more important than gender.

“We are more than half of the country, of course we must be represented in the GNC. And we can do a good job too.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

“I really don't care about the number of women in the GNC. I am more interested in quality than quantity.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“I know that we have qualified women in Libya. I am convinced that a woman can represent me in the GNC.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

VI. Constitutional Development

Expectations for the Constitution

Some participants – generally those with higher education levels – believe that a new constitution will help bring stability to the country. These participants see the constitution drafting process as a pathway to delineating and protecting citizens' rights, providing order and structure to the government and creating a framework for lawmaking.

Many participants do not understand the principles and purposes of a constitution. Some participants believe the charter can establish security, while others argue that it should improve healthcare. Although participants offer few details on how they expect the constitution to improve their daily lives, it is clear that expectations are high.

“When they draft the constitution everything will be organized.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“As long as there is no constitution there is no law in the country. Who would place you on trial if you stole or broke the law?” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“The constitution should give us unlimited freedom, freedom to say anything and to protest and to do anything.” Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“The constitution should make everyone know what their job is and what their rights are. Some people don't understand their rights.” Woman, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"Nothing will be clear until the constitution is drafted." Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"The constitution should establish all kinds of services for the people." Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

Many participants lack confidence in the GNC's capacity to oversee the constitution-drafting process. Some respondents believe that citizens must play a role in monitoring the development of the constitution.

"We should monitor the process to ensure credibility. I have fears that there will be under-the-table deals during the drafting of the constitution." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

"I don't have any trust in the GNC to do this. The constitution should be written by the public." Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"There should be a committee from the people than can also monitor this process." Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"Based on their current performance, the GNC is not capable of supervising the drafting of the constitution." Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

Religion and the Constitution

While nearly all participants agree that the constitution should draw heavily from Islamic Shari'a, the key debate emerging is whether the constitution will be based exclusively on Shari'a or whether Shari'a will be one important reference among others. Those participants who believe Islam should be the only source of the constitution claim that such an approach is both natural – because Islam has rules for all aspects of life – and necessary due to the moral instruction inherent in Islam.

A handful of participants suggest that framing the constitution within the context of Shari'a will provide protection against extremist elements that would be unable to criticize the resulting document, and would be bound to adhere to its tenets.

"The most important thing while drafting the constitution is having the Qur'an in front of you." Woman, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, non-voter

"If we follow the Islamic Shari'a the extremists won't break the rules, but if we follow other sources in the constitution, this will give space for extremists to act out, because they feel they are above man's rule. Islamic Shari'a can prevent this because the extremists won't challenge God's rules." Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

"If I say it should be the only source, they'll make me out to be an extremist, but this is the way I feel. I can't really give you a reason for this, it is just how I feel." Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"What if the other sources contradict the Shari'a? No, no. Shari'a has to be the only source." Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"It should be the only source because it contains everything and has solutions for everything." Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"If you say Islamic Shari'a is not the only source for the constitution, it is like you insulted it by saying it is not good enough to draft a constitution." Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Other participants believe that a constitution inspired by Shari'a, but that draws from other sources, will protect the country from extremism and ensure that Libya is tolerant of minority rights and other religions. Others argue that Shari'a is not comprehensive enough to encompass all the issues that must be tackled in the new constitution and that they prefer to be inspired by religion rather than tied to a particular interpretation. **They emphasize that a constitution based on multiple sources should be careful not to contradict Shari'a.**

"Islamic Shari'a is one of the most important sources but not the only source and other sources should not interfere with our Islamic Shari'a." Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"The economic and financial issues with foreign countries, how will you solve them? There are some things that we can't take from the Shari'a because they don't exist." Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"The world is evolving and you don't want to put yourself in a corner. You need other sources to help you out." Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"Some things we won't find in the Shari'a, so we have to use other sources." Woman, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"There should be other sources. We are not like Saudi Arabia." Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Women's Rights and the Constitution

There is disagreement over whether the constitution should include specific provisions addressing women's rights. Some participants – generally women – believe it is important to entrench protections for women, including the rights of Libyan women married to non-Libyans.

"Women's rights are crucial for the constitution." Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

"The constitution should preserve women's rights." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

"The constitution has to include rights for widows and nationality rights for the children of Libyan women married to non-Libyans." Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Other participants, generally men, argue that if the constitution is based on Islamic Shari'a law, then entrenching women's rights would be redundant as Islam protects the rights of women. Some participants claim that men and women are already equal and that there is no need to specify rights for women. Others are concerned that delineating women's rights in the constitution concerning issues such as property could conflict with cultural traditions.

"Regarding women's rights, I think whatever is mentioned in the constitution shouldn't interfere with our Islamic Shari'a. If we follow Shari'a it will guarantee women's rights and everyone's rights." Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"If Islamic Shari'a is the main source of the constitution, this means that it will be impossible for the constitution to be unfair towards the women. If we deny Islamic Shari'a it means we're not convinced by our own religion and religion came to guarantee human rights in the first place. If there are international rights that conflict with Shari'a then no thanks." Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"Women have the same rights as any person in Libya, it doesn't matter what sex, age, or race you are, we all have the same rights." Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"If we make it completely equal there will be conflict on some subjects. For example at the moment the amount that a woman inherits from her father isn't the same as what her brothers inherit." Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Public Awareness and Participation in Constitution-Drafting

Participants feel uninformed about the constitution-drafting process. They are eager for more information and hopeful that the government or the media will play a role in raising awareness among citizens.

"We don't know much on the process of drafting the constitution. It's considered as something new for us. We hope that the GNC will clarify it for us through the media." Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“I don't know much about this.” Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“There is an important point that has to be addressed, which is that of awareness campaigns. For example if there were 140 amendments, someone has to come out and explain all 140 to raise awareness about each and every one of them. Anyone who says yes or no has to know why.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“We should first raise our awareness. We need awareness and workshops on all of this.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

Citizens want and expect to be engaged in the constitution-drafting process. While participants disagree over who should be responsible for the technical drafting – some believe a committee of lawyers and experts should prepare a draft, while others want citizens to be surveyed for their input before a draft is prepared – most participants agree that Libyans need to be consulted throughout the drafting process or the constitution will lack legitimacy.

“It is vital that the people get involved because then the constitution will be stronger and people will take it more seriously knowing they were a part of its drafting.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“The GNC should carry out questionnaires to see what the people want in the constitution.” Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“Before they write it, they have to ask us what we want in the constitution. They should carry out surveys on what women want in the constitution.” Woman, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“They must give the people a draft for them to vote on. If people demand it they should edit the constitution.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

Participants believe that the constitution-drafting committee should consult technical experts, lawyers, and academics. Some respondents claim it is important for the drafters to seek approval and input from Muslim sheikhs to ensure that the constitution does not contradict Islam.

“Preparation of the constitution requires very intelligent and educated people that have a good background regarding Libya and the Libyan people.” Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“We will also need religious professionals to ensure no problems can occur after many years.” Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"I think religious men should be consulted." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

"Muslim Sheiks need to take part in this. They have to make sure this constitution does not go against anything from the Shari'a." Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

There is disagreement over whether the tribes should be formally consulted in the drafting of the constitution. While some participants, particularly those in Sabha, claim that the tribes have considerable representation and should be engaged by the constitution-drafting committee, others claim that their influence should be limited.

"As we do have a tribal system, I think the head of tribes should take the frontline and we should follow the wise people." Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"Life in Libya works between tribes and lawyers and judges so we should also consult tribal elders." Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"No they should not have any influence. The tribes shouldn't be included in drafting the constitution." Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"We don't want the tribal system anymore. The heads of tribes should not participate." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

"In some areas in Libya people can't work outside the orders of his head of tribe." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

"They should show it to the tribes. There are social factors you have to respect." Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

VII. Islam and Politics

Consistent with findings from focus groups conducted in November 2011 and April 2012, most respondents want and expect Islam to play a role in political life. Respondents describe Islam as a democratic religion with essential moral instruction that can guide politics, keep politicians honest, protect citizen rights, and safeguard against corruption and tyranny.

"We are all Muslims, so of course Islam will play an important role in politics." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

"Islam has a major role to play in politics. Islam organizes it and puts it in the right way for us. Islam won't tell you to have a monarchy or federalism. You can organize it however you want but it has to go with the Shari'a. Run it however

you want, as long as Shari'a accepts it.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“Islam has a clear role to play in politics. It should ensure fairness and equality.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“We only need Islam. Because if you follow religion you will go in the right direction.” Woman, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“Islam is the closest religion to democracy and our religion plays a major role.” Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

There is some support for a separation between religion and the state. Some participants explain that religion will always play an important cultural role, but should have limited influence in the political sphere. There is a sense that religion is personal and family-based, leading to considerable discomfort with the idea of Islamic authorities and prominent sheiks interfering in local interpretations and cultural traditions. Politicians who emphasize religion in their speeches are broadly seen as dishonest or manipulative. Some participants caution that mixing religion and politics will allow extremism to take hold in the country.

“I’m against how religion gets involved with everything political. We can have laws and Muslim Sheikhs shouldn’t get involved writing them.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“I’m sick of our politicians trying to show how religious they are. Look at Turkey – they are Muslims that are thinking of growing and building their country. They already know they are Muslims, but they don’t have to go out on the streets saying ‘we’re Muslims, Islam Islam Islam.’ By building their country right, their religion became stronger.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“People used Islam to gain power, so anyone that uses it now as a political tool just looks weak. They have made Islam look bad when it comes to politics.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“I agree Islam is important but we must not mix politics and religion too much. We do not want extremism here.” Woman, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“We can’t take anything to the extreme or else we’ll end up just like Afghanistan.” Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

While some participants see secular countries as more developed with better education and human rights, many respondents express fears that a secular government in Libya would allow corruption to thrive and would contribute to a degradation of Libya’s conservative moral fabric. Although some respondents express hope that tourism will

bring development to Libya, others are quick to argue that tourism might open the door to alcohol consumption, drug abuse, and other immoral behavior.

“There is better development in these [secular] countries, people are educated and they love their country.” Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“Having religion separate from politics would open the doors of opportunities for people to do things I don't want them to do in my country, so why bother? Just keep the door closed.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“The lack of ethics is the biggest negative [about secular countries].” Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“Any country that doesn't go with the Shari'a won't move forwards. We want to have a country with Islamic Shari'a to be the basis of everything. We want to work and make money and have businesses. We want education, as long as all of this goes with the Shari'a. As for tourism we want that too, but we don't want discos and bars here. We want things to go with the Shari'a.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“All the things that Islam prohibits like alcohol and drugs are wrong but at the same time I want to see prosperity through tourism. But tourism means you have to bring these things like alcohol and other things that Islam prohibits, so I don't know.” Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

Libyans agree that moderate Islamic principles should influence governance, but opinions vary on exactly what that means in terms of the role religion should play in public life.. There is consensus on the need to avoid extremism.

Although participants overwhelmingly declare their desire to live in a “moderate Islamic country,” they struggle with trying to define what moderate means to them. They describe moderate Islam as a rejection of extremism, both extreme secularism and extreme Islam. They claim that moderate Islam provides a middle ground that embraces tolerance and respects rights.

“Moderate Islam means that religion expresses itself but doesn't enforce itself.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“Being moderate means we take the important things from Islam and leave the strict things.” Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“The Islamic extremists might go overboard. We don't want our country to be extreme. I just don't want nasty things in Libya and that includes the other extreme – like the bars and alcohol and drugs.” Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“Moderate Islam is one that is not extremist and not secularist.” Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“Moderate means rejecting extremists. I don’t want this place like Afghanistan. Honestly I get scared if I think about it too much.” Woman, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“When I say Islamic Shari’a it means I don’t want bars and discos around but I also don’t want bearded men interfering with everything.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“To me, moderate Islam means to be able to take the positives in the western world such as education, but not the style of living.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

Some participants express hope that Libya could become a successful global example of a moderate Islamic democracy.

“I wish we can give a great example to the world that we can be a democratic Islamic country.” Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“Being an Islamic and democratic country means we have to respect both Islam and democracy. We as a country must make Islam look good. If we make it happen, if we manage to balance both democracy and Islam, we will be a good example.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

VIII. Political Parties and Movements

Public understanding of political parties and movements remains low. Although there are few participants who can comprehensively define what a political party is, respondents – generally those with higher educational backgrounds – tend to associate political parties with peaceful competition for political positions and groupings of like-minded people pursuing common goals.

“A political party is a group of people with a certain ideology that is trying to gain authority.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

“A group of people united with the same opinions and thinking.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“A political party is who I elect to control the country and organize it.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

After decades of one-man rule, some respondents claim a political party system provides important safeguards against tyranny. They associate political parties with a diversity of opinion and positive competition to serve people.

“We were taught in the past to be against all political parties but they turned out to be a good thing.” Woman, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“Political parties help to provide different opinions.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

“In Islam we are taught that different opinions bring blessings for the people. The competition between the political parties will only serve the country better.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“Political parties mean variations, it means showing the variations we have and letting someone represent these different variations and respecting each other with a unified goal which is what is best for our county despite the different points of view.” Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“A democratic process must contain political parties present in it. We didn't have political parties during the kingdom, which made it possible to stage a coup as Gaddafi did.” Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Participants are generally unfamiliar with most of Libya's emerging political parties and entities beyond the Muslim Brotherhood affiliated Justice and Construction Party (JCP) and the moderate National Forces Alliance (NFA), the party of former wartime Prime Minister Mahmoud Jebril that won 39 of the 80 seats designated for parties in the GNC.⁴

Nevertheless, participants see the political landscape as oversaturated with political parties. They are concerned by the growing number of political movements, as well as the difficulty of distinguishing among them. Some respondents claim it is hard to find parties credible or relatable when they all have the same slogans and make the same outlandish promises.

“The problem is that all the political parties basically have the same programs, which is unbelievable.” Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“Most parties have the same views and the same goals. This just causes confusion for the people and for voters.” Woman, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“America has two political parties, the Democratic and Republican parties. Here in Libya we have over 150 political parties. We need fewer political parties.” Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

⁴ Libya's election featured a mixed electoral system in which 120 of the 200 seats were reserved for individual candidates and 80 seats were reserved for political party candidate lists.

Focus group research conducted in April 2012, three months prior to the July elections, showed an improvement in public perceptions of political parties. Conversely, this goodwill had faded considerably as participants in the November 2012 study were disappointed by parties that did not fulfill their campaign promises. They claim that political parties are singularly motivated by a desire for authority and that they are ignoring the needs and concerns of citizens. Others are disillusioned by political struggles among parties in the new government and believe that parties are obstructing progress by placing their interests before the country's.

"They forgot about citizens. Before the elections they started saying we will do this and that, but later it became clear they just wanted supporters." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

"You find that the people holding positions are loyal to their political parties and cannot agree with other points of view. They are forgetting that the main thing is the wellbeing of the country rather than personal advantages. I think this is one of the disadvantages of the political parties." Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"The political parties are what are causing the GNC to slow down its work." Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"After what I saw from politicians and party leaders here in Libya it became obvious that it's better not to have political parties in Libya." Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"It is weird to see how the political parties disappeared after they got their seats. We are yet to see any political party to come down to the people and talk with them." Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"Every political party has its own agenda and its own goals. The citizen goes and votes for them to see those goals reached but when they are elected they don't do any of them." Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"Most of the political parties I've seen lack credibility. Before the elections I saw great stuff, such as workshops and training for the youth, but after the elections I don't see anything." Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Some participants are convinced that political parties have no place in Libya's new politics. They see them as untrustworthy, conniving, and motivated by secret and possibly foreign interests. They are concerned that political parties are potentially divisive and could cause conflict among Libyans at a time when the country needs to be united.

"I don't know, [parties are] something we're not used to, something scary. We just do not trust them." Woman, Benghazi, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"We don't want political parties, we want to all be as one. We want to be united. Having people with separate ideas doesn't make us united. If everyone sticks to his or her own idea, conflicts might occur." Woman, Zintan, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

"I worry about parties because they might have another agenda or be backed or financed by another country. That is the worst negative, it is even a crime!" Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"The formation of political parties created the competition between different political parties to achieve power rather than to serve their country and achieve what is best for Libya." Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

"I think political parties will not be successful right now because they are unclear, we don't know how they are financially backed. I think they will fail." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

"Political parties all over the world have one priority which is their country but here in Libya our political parties care only for their political party, and even if two members from different political parties don't agree on some points they should both agree on what is better in general for the country." Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Political parties are still struggling to overcome the legacy of four decades of Gaddafi's propaganda against parties. Gaddafi banned political parties and several participants still recall the popular regime slogan "whoever joins a political party is a traitor."

"This is still something new for us. Under the old regime we were made to hate political parties." Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"The old regime planted a hate in us towards political parties and replaced them with tribes. I think it is slowly starting to break down and in time political parties will be more supported." Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

"We have always heard the phrase 'whoever forms political parties is a traitor' so I am confused when we talk about parties." Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

"We didn't use to speak about politics in the past because we were taught to fear them." Woman, Benghazi, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

Many Libyans still do not understand the roles and functions of political parties in general or – more specifically – the motivations and identities of Libya's many new political movements.

“We don’t understand what parties are or what they are doing.” Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“I think political parties have something to do with the government and I don’t really know much else.” Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“I wish we could understand their plans and ideas and then we would decide if they are good ideas or bad for the country.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Participants claim that they need more information on parties – both on the roles and functions of parties and more specifically on the platforms and goals of the new Libyan political movements. The pervasive lack of information and understanding of political parties clearly contributes to the suspicion and skepticism with which people view parties. Some participants say they are willing to be convinced if parties will make the effort to reach out to them and explain themselves. They want parties to articulate clear platforms of how they intend to solve key issues facing Libya, including security, the economy, corruption, and development.

“I can’t say that I’m against parties in general. For example, I might like the views of a certain party in the future and find them to be sincere.” Woman, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“They need to answer some of my questions. What are their goals? What do they want for the country, where are they taking us?” Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“If the political party shows clear proof that they will benefit the country, my area, and the society then I would consider joining.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“Outside of Libya people do not only vote for a political party, they also question their actions and ask for information on issues such as taxes, etc. We need the people of Libya to be like that, to go in deeper to fully understand what is going on. We should raise awareness.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“I didn’t want political parties to be in Libya, but I attended a lecture on them and I was convinced that if they were applied correctly they would be successful.” Woman, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

Most participants claim they want a moderate Islamic-oriented party that is transparent and clear in its goals, has no foreign loyalties, and is committed to serving the Libyan people and developing the country. Above all, participants want political parties to deliver tangible improvements to their daily lives. Many participants claim that they are

tired of political speeches and broken promises and that they want to see concrete actions and improvements to their daily lives.

“I don’t want a party that is extremist. For me, being a moderate Islamic party is very important.” Man, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, voter

“Parties should pursue activities that address people’s problems. Study what the people want, really see what they’re looking for and what they’re suffering from.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“I feel the best way for political parties to win people is to do practical things so that people can see and feel the positive changes. The problem is I feel most political party leaders are prioritizing politics and winning seats rather than serving the people.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

“For the average citizen we just want to see tangible developments—healthcare, education, fixing our salaries.” Man, Zintan, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“If I see that a party is working hard and performing its roles, then I will support it but I am not doing anything before I see something.” Man, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“I want a party to communicate, but to communicate with the truth and not just tell the people what they want to hear.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“For me to trust political parties they should continue taking care and representing the people who voted for them, instead of changing.” Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

Public confidence in political parties is low and participants want political parties to build their credibility by listening to people and taking action on the issues that matter to them.

“They have to put themselves in the citizens’ shoes. They have to feel the pain and anger the citizen goes through, because that is when they will make change. That is when they will make a difference.” Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“I would support a political party that listened to people. As long as you want people to vote for you, you need to go down to the people.” Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“I heard that in Turkey the political parties go to your front door knocking and asking what you want and what you need.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“What attracts me to a political party is whether it can be trusted. When I say trust, I mean transparency at the highest level. For example if the political party won, and they promised the people to build new hospitals then they must do so. If they can't or won't, they then have to say why they couldn't or why they're not going to. They have to communicate well with the people.” Man, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

IX. Looking Forward

When asked to describe their visions for Libya's future, participants express hope that their country will be a developed nation in which citizens enjoy their rights and benefit from a strong, growing economy. They hope for improvements in education, healthcare, infrastructure, and local services. Many participants emphasize that the ideal future Libya is a country with protected borders, a well-trained army, and competent police.

Participants believe that their country has vast potential, particularly given its oil reserves, and attribute the lack of progress to mismanagement or neglect by the country's new authorities. In describing their hopes for the future, some participants reflect on how their ideal Libya contrasts so deeply with the current context.

“In my ideal Libya, you would see positive changes all around you - clean water coming from the taps, no electricity cuts, and clean streets. I would feel a sense of relief and be content and I would not stress anymore about myself and the next generation.” Woman, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“I think the perfect Libya is when all citizens receive their complete rights in a free, democratic country.” Man, Misrata, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

“I would love to wake up and see strong education, an improved health system, to be able to feel that you are living in a complete country.” Man, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“If Libya was in an ideal state, it would be one of the top countries in the world. It would have a strict law, be full of riches, and would be one of the best countries. It would be number one economically and number one in tourism. It would have the least amount of poverty compared to any other country. Quality of life would be at the top, one of the highest rankings that no one could compete with. So if Libya goes in the right direction, I don't want to say it would be the best country in the world, but it would surely be one of the best. But right now, Libya is at zero.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“The perfect Libya would have a very high standard of living, but right now we have the lowest standard of living we have ever experienced.” Woman, Sabha, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“In an ideal situation we would see the enforcing of the law and people respecting the police. There would be no more weapons everywhere.” Woman, Benghazi, over 35, more than secondary education, non-voter

Libyans are concerned about the future and some doubt the capacity of their elected leaders to effectively represent citizens or navigate through the shifting contours of a difficult political transition. Regardless of age, geography, or gender, participants want to know that their leaders are listening to them and that their opinions are valued.

Participants are frustrated by what they see as the failure of the current authorities to deliver the changes they envisioned after the revolution. They are eager for an improved security environment and want to see visible efforts to develop Libya's economy and infrastructure. They want reassurance that their country is being led by transparent, honest people who are not motivated by self-interest. Participants want consistent and accurate information on political developments, platforms, and policies, and they want to be included in decision-making. They ask their leaders to keep moving the country forward, take their representative and governing responsibilities seriously and to honor the sacrifices of the revolution by securing and strengthening Libya in the next phase of the transition process.

“Please just give us something, anything. Just a little hope that the country will change. Give us change we can see.” Woman, Sabha, 18-35, secondary education or less, non-voter

“Do the job I elected you for. Be faster.” Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“We want to know everything and we must be updated with everything that happens. They must gain the trust of people by being transparent. I want them to start communicating with people so we can feel that they are really doing their best for the country.” Woman, Tripoli, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“If you don't think you're up to the job, resign for your own good.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“My husband was martyred in the revolution. I want to see that what happened to my husband brings good to the country. I want to see change.” Woman, Misrata, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

“We had a revolution against Gaddafi; we can always have another.” Man, Tripoli, over 35, more than secondary education, voter

“I hope they know how big their responsibility is. If they do not achieve things, the people will turn against them just like they did against Gaddafi.” Man, Derna, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"The blood of the martyrs led you here so make their wish come true and make this a better country." Woman, Benghazi, 18-35, more than secondary education, voter

"Don't disappoint us and remember we were the ones that elected you." Woman, Derna, over 35, secondary education or less, voter

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants are proud of Libya's historic July 7, 2012 elections, but increasingly frustrated by the lack of visible improvements in security and service provision. They describe a disconnect between citizens and their leaders and feel the GNC is repeating the mistakes of its predecessor, the NTC. The GNC, now three months into its mandate, has an opportunity to establish a precedent for responsive, accountable government in a country with virtually no history of representative governance. If citizens continue to perceive that the GNC and government are failing to take action on the highest priority issues, particularly security, public dissatisfaction may further increase and could potentially destabilize the transition process. Participants' responses in this study provide some guidance for how best to accomplish these objectives.

Setting Expectations for More Representative and Responsive Governance

Participants in this study express waning tolerance with the perceived shortcomings of the GNC. They see the GNC as opaque and poorly organized and criticize its members as more interested in personal gains than in meeting the needs of the citizens who elected them. They increasingly blame the government for their problems and are developing a view that it is unresponsive to their needs, in the same way previous governments have been. Patience is dissipating quickly as Libyans are disappointed that the people they voted for are unable to deliver even small improvements.

Recommendations to the GNC and transitional government:

- Establish regular channels for communication between government and citizens.
- Improve national media as a means to raise awareness and inform people about political developments, the transitional framework and timeline, and other necessary information.
- Increase communication about political decision-making including sharing information on the GNC's mandate, capacities, and limitations.
- Expand efforts to engage in dialogue with citizens through traditional and new media, as well as by regular travel to meet with constituents.
- Discuss the problem of perceived 'centralism' openly with the public and communicate plans for addressing it, engaging power-brokers from the East, West, and South of the country.
- Prioritize citizen engagement and constituent relations, including the opening of constituency offices throughout the country.
- Manage expectations on security and other citizen priority issues with communication of realistic timeframes and honest assessments of what can be accomplished.
- Prioritize bringing order to the security situation, creating a structured, national army, and delineating security responsibilities among local and national authorities.
- Demonstrate a strong commitment to anti-corruption efforts through the creation of robust investigative and enforcement mechanisms.

- Manage expectations on economic development with communication of realistic timeframes and honest assessments of what can be accomplished within budget constraints.

Ensuring an Inclusive Constitution-Drafting Process

While public awareness of the constitution-drafting process is low, citizens are anxious for more information on the drafting process. There is limited confidence in the GNC's capacity to oversee the constitution-drafting process and ensure citizen engagement. Participants broadly believe that public input is essential for the constitution to have legitimacy.

Recommendations to the GNC and the constitution-drafting committee:

- Develop a framework for the selection of members of the constitution-drafting committee and publicly explain the process.
- GNC members should take immediate steps to ensure broad societal representation in the constitution drafting process, set clear timelines for review, and resolve outstanding questions about distribution of power among regions.
- The GNC and the constitution-drafting committee should ensure that civil society and political parties have opportunities to provide input and oversee the constitution-drafting process.
- Civil society organizations, political parties, and the media should: be held responsible for their interventions in the political process; ensure that they participate positively in the constitution-drafting process; monitor the reform process; and, provide civic education to Libyan citizens on a new constitution in advance of a potential referendum.

Building Support for the Political Process

Participants have high expectations for future elections, but limited access to information has tarnished their perception of the July 2012 electoral process. They are desirous of more information, both on the mechanics of electoral operations and the candidate and political party choices available to them. The High National Election Commission (HNEC) will be responsible for managing future electoral processes, and must play a lead role on voter information and education, particularly on issues surrounding voting, counting procedures, and the role of international and domestic observers. Political parties can also promote informed, broad public participation in the upcoming constitutional referendum and elections by offering concrete platforms that differentiate them from their political opponents.

Recommendations to the HNEC:

- Communicate the purpose and process of future elections and referenda to eliminate public confusion.
- Engage in a large-scale effort to provide details about the voting process so that voters are less likely to assume manipulation and feel more comfortable participating.
- Address concerns about the voting and counting procedures and reassure the population of their ability to cast a ballot in secret.

- Inform the public about voting and counting safeguards and the role of monitors and observers to build confidence in the process and the results.
- Promote the benefits of multi-party competition and the rights of all parties to campaign.
- Share information that will help citizens develop more realistic expectations of election outcomes.
- Facilitate greater women's electoral participation through broad-based voter education and voter information efforts.
- Encourage political parties and candidates to campaign and provide citizens with information on their platforms and visions for the country's future.

Recommendations to political parties:

- Communicate realistic, achievable goals and concrete plans for moving the country forward, to facilitate voters' ability to distinguish among parties.
- Proactively inform citizens of the roles of political parties in the democratic process, particularly following elections.
- Undertake efforts to promote citizens' participation in a future constitutional referendum and elections.

APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP LOCATIONS

Location	Gender	Age	Education	Voter/Non-voter
Benghazi	Male	18-35	More than secondary education	Voter
Benghazi	Female	18-35	More than secondary education	Voter
Benghazi	Female	35+	More than secondary education	Non-voter
Derna	Male	18-35	More than secondary education	Voter
Derna	Female	35+	Secondary education or less	Voter
Tripoli	Male	35+	More than secondary education	Voter
Tripoli	Female	18-35	More than secondary education	Voter
Tripoli	Male	18-35	More than secondary education	Non-voter
Misrata	Male	18-35	More than secondary education	Voter
Misrata	Female	18-35	More than secondary education	Voter
Misrata	Male	35+	More than secondary education	Non-voter
Zintan	Male	35+	More than secondary education	Voter
Zintan	Female	18-35	Secondary education or less	Voter
Sabha	Male	18-35	Secondary education or less	Voter
Sabha	Female	35+	More than secondary education	Voter
Sabha	Female	18-35	Secondary education or less	Non-voter