WWF is conscious that the long-term success of the conservation activities it supports can only be reached through the active participation of local individuals, groups and organisations. For the coming years, WWF has thus decided to concentrate much of its effort in North Africa on helping build the capacity of grassroots and local environmental groups of the south of the Mediterranean as a contribution to the democratization processes initiated by the Arab spring results.

WWF participated in the first Libyan Civil Society Forum (Tripoli, 9-10 May, 2012) and had the chance to meet a group of eight Libyan environmental NGOs. At that meeting, the Libyan environmental NGOs confirmed their interest and willingness to work with WWF on building their capacity. We agreed that the Libyan Wildlife Trust (LWT) would be a partner organization for this project, while project activities would be directed towards a broad range of rural and urban Libyan Environmental NGOs.

Unfortunately, as far as the status of non-governmental organizations is concerned, the gap is substantial between the countries of the northern rim, and those of the south and east Mediterranean region. While the NGO movement is well developed, lively and influential in the EU countries of southern Europe, most NGOs in the south Mediterranean can be characterized as having limited strength, membership, and capabilities.

As past experiences from all over the world show, the presence of professional and qualified NGOs that can reference themselves legitimately to local societies, that can represent and promote common interests such as the quality of the environment, that are able to bring a constructive input to political and governmental processes, is a crucial condition for the long term achievement of environmental conservation results and widespread environmental awareness.