



REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP ON CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

Quarterly Progress Report #12

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FHI 360

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The OMEP Regional Partnership on Culture and Development (RPCD) was awarded as a cooperative agreement to FHI 360 on September 22, 2010.

The purpose of the Program is to “support the dissemination of regional research on development issues, share best practices and lessons learned from international development programs, and provide a forum for knowledge sharing and intellectual innovation.”

This is the twelfth quarterly report of the program and covers the period from July 1 - September 30, 2013.

Submitted to: John Harris
Agreement Officer’s Representative
OMEP/USAID

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OVERVIEW

In its twelfth quarter, the Regional Partnership on Culture and Development (RPCD) continued taking major steps toward building a sustainable network of research institutions in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, completed the production of all publications (the Technical Publication Series, Annotated Bibliography Series, and Research Highlights), and carried out a number of events.

In late September, the 15 members of the Partnership Forum Technical Committee were elected, and RPCD began the selection of the Steering Committee members. RPCD is also working with the host organization, Forum Citoyenneté (FC) in Morocco, to plan for the PF Leadership Summit in mid-November.

Despite political events in the region which might have impacted participation, RPCD successfully implemented two PF National Workshops entitled “Turning Research Into Action” in Jordan and Egypt. At the beginning of the quarter, RPCD launched its three main research grants, as well as the three grants resulting from the ACWUA event in January. Almost all grantees submitted their first milestones during quarter.

Finally, RPCD continued research for Missions in Morocco and Yemen, as well as on a regional scale for OMEP.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

On July 3, 2013, due to the severe political unrest in Egypt, the U.S. State Department ordered the mandatory departure for non-essential USG personnel and their dependents. The evacuation was extended twice during the quarter, through the end of September. FHI 360 follows USG policy and decisions on the posting and evacuation of personnel, and as a result evacuated RPCD Regional Program Director Matthew Pietz and his family. Instead of locating the RPD in one of the designated relief stations for the evacuation (Washington, DC and London), FHI 360 proposed locating Mr. Pietz in Turkey. This has allowed him to remain in the same region as the seven countries in the RPCD portfolio, and to communicate with staff during core work hours. This decision was approved by USAID. If the evacuation continues into October, it is anticipated the RPD may continue to work from Turkey for the remainder of the program.

FHI 360’s Emergency Management Team at its headquarters in Washington, DC were assessing the situation on a daily basis from the start of the crisis, in conjunction with Mariam Hanna, acting Regional Program Director in Egypt, and Dr. Cherif Soliman, FHI 360 Country Director for Egypt (not employed on RPCD) to ensure the safety of RPCD staff and continued operations.

The RPCD office was closed for several days in the early weeks of July, to prevent staff attempting unsafe travel to the office. Staff worked from home on these days. Given the regional nature of the program, much of RPCD’s work has always been online and via telephone, and the team is proficient at working remotely, via Skype, email, and webinars as needed.

RPCD made contingency plans for the National Workshop in Egypt as well as for the next meeting of the PF Leadership Summit. The Workshop was delayed from August to October; the Summit was moved from Egypt to Morocco, where the PF host organization is located. Despite these and other adjustments, the progress of RPCD activities has not been affected by the political situation and the team has continued to meet and exceed its targets during the quarter.

Close out

Also in the reporting quarter, RPCD continued planning for its close out in February 2014. In September, RPCD shared with its AOR the closeout plan, which summarizes the steps RPCD will take to ensure a smooth and complete closeout process. RPCD also shared lists of the program inventory, which include the condition of each item and the proposed date of disposition. RPCD will identify the recipients for disposition in an application process open to PF members in Egypt in January. Recipients will be chosen by a review committee, and selection will be made according to three main criteria:

- Apparent strength of the organization's need for equipment (60 points)
- Relevance of equipment to organization's work (30 points)
- Extent of organization's performance in RPCD program (workshops, conference, publications, grants) (10 points)

The closeout plan was approved by AOR on September 13, 2013, and the RPCD closeout team is already working according to the plan to ensure a successful process.

As part of the closeout, RPCD has also worked to preserve the technical materials and products of the program in an attractive and easy-to-access format. These will be shared toward the end of the program, and may be useful for PF members, USAID, or other stakeholders with an interest in research for development. Elements to be included in this package of materials are:

- Training workshop materials
- Research request reports
- Publications: TPS, ABS, RH, What Works
- The Research Guidelines document compiled for internal RPCD use, known as the REF

The team is also working on a documentary to collect PF members' feedback on the Forum activities, and also to document lessons learned for future programming.

A series of webinars will also be conducted to disseminate grants research products.

Staff Changes

Projects Manager Sherine El Traboulsi left the RPCD in July to pursue her PhD at Oxford University in England. Her work was distributed among RPCD staff: the Regional Program Director and Research Analyst for Democracy & Governance took over the studies for Yemen under Sherine's direction; the Research Analyst for Youth took control of the Expert Database; and the Regional Program Director took over the What Works publication.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Component A: Access available regional research

Partnership Forum

In the July-September quarter, another major step was achieved toward sustaining the PF network—the election of the three technical committees that will play a major role in coordinating forum activities.

As with other activities to support forum sustainability, the election was planned and agreed upon by PF members at the Launch event in May in Amman, Jordan. The report detailing the accomplishments, outputs and decisions of that event was finalized during the quarter, after gathering member input on the both the Arabic and English versions. The report is now available on the RPCD website and has been sent to all members.

The elections of the Technical Committees were a key step in realizing the PF structure designed by the PF members. With FC as the host organization, the PF will be led by three Technical Committees (one each for Democracy & Governance, Youth, and Natural Resource Management), and one overall Steering Committee. Each Technical Committee has 5 seats. In September 2013, interested PF members shared personal and organizational qualifications for Technical Committee seats. RPCD received applications from 22 organizations to run for seats on the Technical Committees (10 candidates for DG committee, 7 for Youth committee, and 5 candidates for the NRM committee.)

On September 29, RPCD shared applications of the Technical Committees candidates with all PF members to begin voting for five members in each committee. Because only five candidates ran for the Natural Resource Management committee, RPCD did not conduct an election for this committee. The upcoming voting process will be implemented online through this link: <https://www.balloteer.com/bp/nph-bstart?&eid=1212555233157130>. PF members can view the qualifications of each candidate on the website before voting.

In October 2013, RPCD will announce the winning Technical Committees, and will also finalize the election process of the Steering Committee.

Other PF activities this quarter included two National Workshops in the Research Into Action Series in Jordan and Egypt, and planning steps for the PF leadership Summit in Morocco. Both of these activities are detailed under Component D.

Specialist Database

This quarter RPCD performed a revision of the criteria for its Specialist Database. Each resume is now assessed on three main criteria: the expert should have at least 7 years of professional experience, direct experience in one of the three focus areas, a proven record of quality in previous work, and a

geographic focus that at least includes the MENA region. As a result, a number of resumes were removed from the database, most of whom lacked an explicit technical focus on RPCD areas or whose work experience was too brief.

RPCD collected and uploaded 47 resumes during the quarter, making a total of 100 resumes now available.

The database can be viewed by those with logins (available to all USAID staff who are interested) at: <http://www.mena-partnership.info/experts>. The page is not accessible to the public, to protect the personal information contained in the resumes.

Publications

This quarter, RPCD produced the fifth volume of its Annotated Bibliography Series and the sixth volume of the Technical Publications Series. The research team also produced and disseminated the final Research Highlights as part of the monthly Newsletters.

In accordance with USAID approval for the no-cost extension (NCE), RPCD will not produce new issues of these three publications during the NCE period (October 1, 2013-February 28, 2014). However, to avoid flooding those on the RPCD mailing list with several publications in a short period of time, RPCD will release the final ABS at the beginning of October and the final TPS at the end of October.

The following articles appeared in the publications produced this quarter:

Annotated Bibliography Series:

Title of Study	Country	Sector	Year
Prospects for “Democratic Control of the Armed Forces”? Comparative Insights and Lessons for the Arab World in Transition	Regional	DG	2013
Political Participation and Democratic Transition in the Arab World	Regional	DG	2013
Towards a Social Network e-Government Agenda? Measuring Participation 2.0 in the Arab World	Regional	DG	2012
Democratization in the Middle East and North Africa: Perspectives from Democracy Support	Regional	DG	2013
Voting Patterns in Post-Mubarak Egypt	Egypt	DG	2013
Increasing Resilience to Climate Change in the Agricultural Sector of the Middle East: The Cases of Jordan and Lebanon	Jordan, Lebanon	NRM	2013
Water: Reason for Conflict or Catalyst for Peace? The Case of	Regional	NRM	2013

the Middle East			
Water Demand Management: The Mediterranean Experience	Regional	NRM	2012
Quantitative Appraisal of Biomass Resources and their Energy Potential in Egypt	Egypt	NRM	2013
Potential for Renewable Energy Jobs in the Middle East	Regional	NRM	2013
Barriers Hindering Jordanian Women's Advancement to Higher Political and Leadership Positions	Jordan	Youth	2012
Educating Youth for Entrepreneurship in Work and Life: Experience of a Junior Secondary School Project in Morocco	Morocco	Youth	2012
Improving the Quality of Basic Education for the Future Youth of Yemen Post Arab Spring	Yemen	Youth	2013
Sexual and Reproductive Health among Young People in Egypt: The Role and Contribution of Youth-Friendly Services	Egypt	Youth	2013
Political Activism of Palestinian Youth: Exploring Individual, Parental, and Ecological Factors	West Bank	Youth	2012

Technical Publication Series:

Title of Study	Country	Sector	Year
Youth, Action Sports and Political Agency in the Middle East: Lessons from a Grassroots Parkour Group in Gaza	West Bank	Youth	2013
Understanding the Arab Digital Generation	Regional	Youth	2012
e-Government in Arab Countries: A 6-Stage Roadmap to Develop the Public Sector	Regional	DG	2013
Internet Governance: The Quest for an Open Internet in the Middle East and North Africa	Regional	DG	2013
Building Knowledge Capacity for Sustainable Development in the Arab World	Regional	NRM	2013
Overview of Wind Energy and its Cost in the Middle East	Regional	NRM	2013

Research Highlights:

Title of Study	Country	Sector	Year
Wired Citizenship: Youth Learning and Activism in the Middle East	Regional	Youth	2013

The Olive Sector in Palestine	West Bank	NRM	2013
Political Aid and Arab Activism: Democracy Promotion, Justice, and Representation	Regional	DG	2013

Newsletter

RPCD issued three monthly newsletters in the quarter. With each issue more individuals are expressing their interest in receiving the newsletter—it is now sent to over 450 people—and RPCD is continuously improving its content and format. In the August issue, the program gave an overview of the three main RPCD grants, and the expected outcomes. In the September’s issue the program gave an overview of the three climate change adaptation grants and the expected outcomes. FC plans to send out the newsletter after the conclusion of RPCD.

Component B: Conduct research, evaluations, and analysis

Research Requests

The Rapid Response Research Requests proceeded during the quarter as follows:

- **Gender and Conflict Assessments – Yemen:** During the reporting period, RPCD and its subcontractor Apex Consulting in Yemen continued two studies ordered by the Mission there: a Gender Assessment and a Conflict Assessment.
 - o RPCD received comments on the first draft of the Conflict Assessment and increased the level of effort of consultants working under the subcontractor to meet the requests of the Mission. A revised version was submitted on September 5th. USAID responded on September 22nd, and asked a small number of final questions. RPCD will send the third and final version on October 8th.
 - o In its review of the Methodology for the Gender Assessment, USAID/Yemen decided to extend the technical scope of research beyond that in the original Scope of Work, adding two new technical sectors. After consulting with USAID/OMEP, RPCD performed a pipeline analysis and located funds to expand the number of focus groups and the number of experts working on the assignment, and agreed with Apex to modify its contract. The expanded Gender Assessment was carried out during July, August and September, and the draft report will be submitted to USAID by the agreed deadline of October 16th.

- **Literacy Assessment, Morocco:** During the quarter, the Literacy team responded to USAID's first round of comments. The team was able to submit a second draft on September 7, which included a database of interviewed NGOs working in literacy in Morocco, as requested by USAID. RPCD is expecting to receive USAID's comments on the second draft in the next quarter.
- **Assessment of LGBT Rights in the Middle East:** On June 16, RPCD received a request from the USAID Middle East Bureau (MEB) to conduct a study on the status of the LGBT community in the Middle East. RPCD has reviewed the SOW to ensure the program has the capacity and funds to properly meet the goals of the study. After weighing the options of field research and a meeting of specialists, RPCD agreed with OMEP and MEB to conduct a roundtable meeting that will gather experts from the region. The goal of the event is to enhance USAID's understanding of the LGBT community and their challenges in the MENA region, in relation to USAID's democracy and governance work. The Roundtable will be held for three days with approximately fifteen participants (not including USAID and RPCD staff). To mitigate the possibility of negative backlash from those opposed to LGBT rights, or the harassment of participants, the event will be held outside the Middle East region in January 2013. RPCD has started identifying possible invitees from the region, and partners who could collaborate in planning for the event.
- **Research Needs in MENA Region:** In the quarter, RPCD completed the desk research phase of a study to assess the needs of MENA research institutions, building off the Amman, Jordan workshop held in May that was requested by former USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Middle East, Mr. Hady Amr. The research phase was conducted this quarter as well. Ms. Nabila Hamza from the Foundation for the Future, Dr. Hana El-Ghali from the Issam Fares Institute and Ms. Tatjana Sharif from the National Endowment for Democracy were interviewed as experts to receive their feedback on think tank needs, as were 15 PF members. RPCD Research Liaison Officers (RLOs) conducted interviews with members from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, West Bank and Iraq. The transcripts will be analyzed and synthesized early October. A survey will also be shared with all PF members to get their input on the main challenges facing think tanks in the region. The final study will include a summary of best practices and lessons learned from other regions. RPCD expects to complete this study by the end of December.
- **Public Opinion and Awareness Survey in Egypt:** This activity is addressed under "Public Opinion/Polling Research" below.

Research Grants Program

RPCD awarded its three main grants this quarter, and the three grants that came out of the ACWUA conference in January 2013. Six kick-off meetings were conducted between RPCD and grantees to finalize the workplan and the main deliverables. The groups also agreed on contact points from each party for future communications.

Technical review, guidance and supervision of all research activities was carried out by RPCD staff in Cairo with support from Research Liaison Officers in Jordan, West Bank, Lebanon, Iraq and Morocco.

Updates on each grant appear below.

Main Grants:

The largest and most ambitious grants in the RPCD portfolio, the main grants award funds of approximately \$150,000 each to three consortia composed of Partnership Forum members. Signed in July, the main grants are carrying out research in a majority of RPCD presence countries. Updates of main grant activities appear below.

Grant Title: Impact of Population Growth and Climate Change in Lebanon and Egypt on Water Scarcity, Agricultural Output and Food Security

Lead Organization: Columbia University Middle East Research Center (CUMERC), Jordan

Start Date: June 1, 2013

End Date: November 15, 2013

Payment: 78339.47 JOD paid, 27980.08 JOD remaining

Progress: CUMERC has successfully completed its first three milestones, including an inception report, literature review and case study desk research. Two expert consultation workshops in Beirut and Cairo were implemented and were attended by RPCD staff. The quality of the grant activities and submissions has been very high. Two milestones remain, as well as a final webinar to present research findings to USAID. Field work is now underway, including rapid appraisals, interviews and focus groups in five case study sites in Egypt and Lebanon.

Grant Title: Developing a Simplified Decision Support System for Land and Water Management in the Central Jordan Valley to Enhance Food Security

Lead Organization: Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ), West Bank

Start Date: June 1, 2013

End Date: December 31, 2013

Payment: None to date

Progress: The first milestone for this grant was due September 30, 2013 but due to delays in fieldwork completion the deadline was not met. ARIJ has conducted two kick-off meetings in Jordan and West Bank as well as a technical workshop in the West Bank. Also, field work has been conducted in the two case study sites (Jericho, Palestine and Al Shouneh Al Jounoubeyye, Jordan) including interviews and focus groups. Site visits by RPCD staff have found the research to be progressing smoothly and with a high level of quality. The expected submission date for the first milestone is October 24, 2013.

Grant Title: Role of Civil Society Organizations and the Private Sector in Filling Gaps in the Delivery of Services Not Provided by Government

Lead Organization: AID-ME, Egypt

Start Date: June 1, 2013

End Date: November 30, 2013

Payment: 36825.00 USD paid, 108312.00 USD remaining

Progress: Milestone One of four was submitted on time and accepted by RPCD. The first phase included capacity building workshops held in Jordan and Iraq to train the researchers for the needed fieldwork. A total of 3 site visits were completed, 2 in Jordan and 1 in Iraq were completed. The quality of submissions and grant management is high.

UNDP Grants:

Five innovative grant ideas resulted from the Power of One event in Cyprus co-managed between RPCD and UNDP. These projects, which link actors in Eastern Europe and the MENA region, are now underway. To ensure quality for the activities taking place in MENA countries, RPCD is playing a support role in monitoring the work of partner organizations located in Egypt, West Bank, Iraq, Morocco and Jordan. The expected end date for the projects has been extended until 31 December 2013. UNDP and RPCD have held meetings via Skype, connecting the grantees together to discuss the latest updates. All five projects have met throughout August and September.

I. Media Buffer Zone

Implemented by Partnership Forum members Near East Consulting in the West Bank and Qabila Media Productions in Egypt, in cooperation with the Cyprus Community Media Center and Why Not Organization in Bosnia, this project is designed to support civil society organizations to produce and disseminate professional, innovative and cost effective media messages. It will focus on media skills training and capacity building, as well as connect civil society organizations with media professionals to help support their role in social change.

Start Date: 15 March 2013

Expected End Date: 31 December 2013

Milestones:

1. Awareness of the aims, objectives and opportunities of the project by CSOs and media through communication and networking across Cyprus, MENA region and Europe
2. Needs assessment of media skills required from international CSOs
3. Design and develop CSO Media Skills Training Kit to be implemented in training workshops
4. CSO Media Skills Training Kit training of trainers workshops in Egypt
5. Online virtual platform development for media professionals

Progress: The project team has conducted a needs assessment and developed the training toolkit. The needs assessment questionnaire was sent out via email to all participants of the Power of One Conference from Near East Consulting. The development of the CSO Media Skills training kit was sourced from the Needs Analysis with input from all partners. Qabila has begun preliminary work on the on-line virtual platform. Two trainings are in the planning process, to be held in Egypt and Cyprus during November and December.

2. Ambassadors for Cross-Cultural Dialogue

This project is a partnership between several institutions, including Partnership Forum member Citizenship Forum (Forum Citoyenneté) in Morocco; Youth Power, NGO Support Center and Kontea Heritage in Cyprus; and the Civic Resource Center in Romania. The project will seek to enhance cross-cultural dialogue among youth to challenge stereotypes and reduce prejudice and xenophobia by developing a trainers' manual on cross-cultural facilitation. Through facilitated workshops, youth will engage in discussions on conflict management and reconciliation.

Start Date: 15 March 2013

Expected End Date: 31 December 2013

Milestones:

1. Preparation of Trainer's Manual in Romania
2. Selection of 10 Core Ambassadors Group
3. 10 Ambassadors' training in Cyprus on cross-cultural facilitation
4. 10 local events organized by each Ambassador
5. Project reporting and evaluation

Progress: The project team met in Romania and developed the facilitators' manual which is ready for dissemination. They also finalized the branding and visual identity of the project. The partners finalized the selection criteria for the ambassadors and selected 10 members to form the core group of ambassadors from the countries involved. The training on cross-cultural facilitation took place in July in Cyprus, however the Moroccan Ambassadors were unable to attend due to visa problems. Another training, with same trainers in Cyprus, is being organized in Morocco.

3. i-100

The Egypt Foundation for Youth and Development will work with the Cyprus Family Planning Organization on a project to promote youth volunteerism through an online portal. The portal will map the experiences of volunteers in and highlight volunteering opportunities within civil society organizations across the MENA region and Cyprus.

Expected start date was March 15, 2013. i-100 activities have been postponed to obtain permission from the government agencies in Egypt. Having obtained permission, i-100 is now redrafting the timeline for their activities and started mid-June.

Expected End Date: 31 December 2013

Milestones:

1. Recruitment of campaigners
2. Planning and organizing i-100 campaign
3. Placement of 6 volunteers for 100 hours
4. Development of website
5. Design and production of promotional materials
6. Media production on video and radio
7. Musical event

Progress: The project team has created a website to initiate their campaign (<http://i-volunteer100.org>). The date of the exchange of volunteers was arranged to be on October 22, 2013. Volunteers will be engaged in organizing and participating in the pop festival held in Nicosia. The Egyptian Foundation for Youth Development (EFYD) will send three volunteers ages 18 to 24 years old to participate in Cyprus. A social media strategist is responsible for all the communication and online marketing of the project. A database of the outcomes of the organizations mapping in both Egypt and Cyprus has been finalized to be part of the website and arrangement of the volunteers' placement. Media production in the form of the movie will be produced from October to November. It will be in the form of a motivational video that includes experiences from Volunteers.

4. Inter-regional Networking for Citizen Participation

This project aims at fostering citizen participation and transferring best practices. It will establish innovative participatory models and set up an interregional network for the exchange of skills, knowledge and experience among NGOs and experts in the MENA region, Central and Eastern Europe, and Cyprus. It will be implemented by Partnership Forum members Foundation for the Future in Jordan and the American University in Egypt, along with Kontea Heritage Foundation in Cyprus, Citizen Participation Forum and the Center for Non-for Profit Law in Bulgaria, and Partners for Democratic Change in Slovakia.

Start Date: 15 March 2013

Expected End Date: 31 December 2013

Milestones:

1. Situational analysis – collect data on existing policies, practices and regulations regarding local government and citizen participation in decision making
2. Conduct workshop on good governance and participation approaches
3. Training of local experts
4. Piloting of models in Cyprus and Tunisia
5. Evaluation of impact and recommendations for the future

Progress: The project team conducted a situational analysis of the status of local decision-making in Tunisia and Cyprus. The Municipality of Sousse, Tunisia was selected as local authority partner. Based on the results, a workshop on participatory decision making at the local level was held in Cyprus from July 22-26, 2013 with participants from Cyprus and Tunisia. It included a discussion on the outcomes of the situation analysis; training on organizing participatory approaches for local governance; and development of a community forum for Cyprus. The terms of reference of experts were finalized and approved, and the consultants were selected.

5. Integrating Anthropology Perspectives into Peacebuilding

To identify the main commonalities and convergences in approaches to peacebuilding, this project will integrate anthropological research methods and academic partnerships across institutions in Europe, Cyprus and the Middle East. Implementing partners include the Management Centre of the Mediterranean (Cyprus); Sarenj Organization (Iraq); Europe Haz (Budapest); Kurdistan Human Rights Watch (Iraq); and the Centre of Human Rights, Reconciliation and Public Policy (Iraq). The Iraqi organizations are all PF members.

Start Date: 27 March 2013

Expected End Date: 31 December 2013

Milestones:

1. Creating an online interregional peace platforms
2. Conduct in-depth interviews and focus groups with stakeholders
3. Produce research paper
4. Create infographic
5. Organize multi-sector workshops
6. Disseminate research papers

Progress: The project team developed the inception report, as well as the research methodology. The RPCD research team reviewed all data collection tools, and conducted meetings with project team to

discuss needed changes. Fieldwork began in August, but was interrupted in Erbil because of the security situation.

ACWUA Grants:

As one outcome of the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA) conference in January, which RPCD helped to implement, invited PF members created a pool of ideas for short-term research on water management in the region. These ideas were presented to all 300 attendees of the ACWUA event, who voted on the studies they wanted to see carried out. The three winners are below. All three were signed in August and carried out the majority of their activities this quarter.

Grant Title: Community Based Water Resource Management for Water Cooperation Across a River Basin

Lead Organization: House of Water and Environment, West Bank

Start Date: August 1, 2013

End Date: October 31, 2013

Payment: 5000 USD paid, 21262 USD remaining (budget modification in progress)

Progress: The grant seeks to explore how water cooperation amongst communities across a river basin can use community based approaches for climate resilience. The first milestone was submitted on time had has been accepted after several revisions. The team faced obstacles with coordination and communication between team members which have been overcome through a number of conference calls with the grant partners. This grant is currently undergoing a modification to the scope and budget due to a decision to eliminate the Morocco case study. This decision was due to the unresponsiveness of the partner in Morocco (IEA-ONEP) after several calls and emails. The second milestone was due September 30, 2013 but has been delayed due to these unexpected challenges.

Grant Title: Impact of Climate Change on Agricultural Cropping Patterns in the MENA Region

Lead Organization: Center for Environment and Development in the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE), Egypt

Start Date: August 1, 2013

End Date: October 31, 2013

Payment: 3459.08 USD paid, 26080.93 USD remaining

Progress: This study will use a computer model to suggest optimal cropping strategies in Egypt, Jordan and Yemen. The first milestone including a literature review and inception report was accepted after extensive revisions, which included limited findings of plagiarism. Site visits have shown that partners are collaborating effectively and will begin the modeling phase. Two milestones remain for this grant.

Grant Title: Rehabilitating Water Distribution Systems as an Adaptation to Climate Change

Lead Organization: Hashemite University, Jordan

Start Date: August 1, 2013

End Date: October 31, 2013

Payment: None made yet

Progress: This research examines traditional water management systems and the potential for their rehabilitation. The first milestone including a literature review and work plan was accepted after some modifications, but at the close of the quarter the grantee had not yet submitted a voucher for payment. Grant partners have received comments on their proposed questionnaires and will begin field interviews in the next phase. Some challenges in communication between team members emerged but were resolved with intervention by RPCD. Three milestones remain for this grant. The second milestone is delayed with expected completion by October 24, 2013.

Research and Analytical Tools

This activity takes place in response to USAID requests. During the quarter no tools of this nature were requested, although as seen above RPCD did carry out ongoing research requests.

Public Opinion/Polling Research

Last quarter, RPCD was notified by USAID/Egypt that the anticipated focus group discussions (to test outreach messages developed from the results of the 2012 RPCD public opinion poll in Egypt) will not take place as planned. RPCD will be redirecting the allocated costs to other research requests by Missions.

However, RPCD received confirmation from USAID/Egypt on the implementation of the second wave of the public opinion poll. RPCD had previously compiled the contracting package for Nielsen in December 2012 and was awaiting permission from USAID. On August 6, 2013, USAID gave RPCD the green light to conduct the second wave.

After contracting Nielsen, RPCD obtained permission from the local government's Central Agency for Public Mobilization Statistics (CAPMAS) on September 12. The RPCD team met on September 16 with the Nielsen research team to go over their scope of work and emphasize lessons learned from the first wave. After translating the questionnaire, the trainings were held in Cairo, Alexandria and the Delta. Because of security concerns, the trainings in Upper Egypt were postponed to commence prior to field work. The piloting was also held in Cairo. RPCD will finalize the questionnaire according to the results of the pilot and the fieldwork will begin in October.

Component C: Document USAID Lessons Learned and Best Practices

TIPs (What Works)

The second issue of What Works is currently under development. In this What Works, RPCD shares tips to maximize the effectiveness of using ICT tools in development, and draws upon six to eight success stories.

Component D: Disseminate information to encourage sharing and use of knowledge

Portal

In this quarter, the program made a major update to enrich the digital library collection. The Digital Library now contains 483 articles in the three subject areas. Another 100 articles are expected to be uploaded next quarter.

A page for Webinar recordings is also available. It includes downloadable versions that can be watched offline. The page will also include a list and abstract of each webinar conducted by the program.

The program continued to upload weekly news and updates, as well as newsletters and publications to the dedicated pages.

Webinars

In August 19, Dr. Muhannad Alazzeah, Middle East Regional Coordinator for Disability Rights and Advocacy at Handicap International, presented a webinar entitled “**Research into Action Case Study**”. The webinar detailed his experience using research to advocate for improved rights for the disabled in Jordan. Dr. Alazzeah discussed how the civil society report on Jordan’s performance under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, of which is it a signatory, was instrumental in advocating for better adherence to the convention. Participants shared their insights, identifying recommendations to policy makers and development practitioners in the region.

On September 10, Christopher M. Schroeder, US-based entrepreneur and venture investor, introduced the findings of his book “**Startup Rising: The Entrepreneurial Revolution Remaking in the Middle East**” in a webinar of the same title. During his presentation, he examined the role played by major private equity firms, venture capitalists and global technology players to effect a “second hidden revolution” in the Middle East—a revolution for improved opportunities for entrepreneurship. More than 30 PF members and USAID staff members attended this webinar.

RPCD is planning to conduct a new round of webinars next quarter to disseminate the results of the grants program.

Regional Conferences

PF Leadership Summit

In the reporting quarter, RPCD worked closely with FC to prepare for the PF Leadership Summit, which will gather the host organization, RPCD leadership, and the members of the Technical and Steering Committees. The elected members will work together to ratify the decisions taken in May during the PF Launch and to plan the next steps for the PF. This Leadership Summit will build on the foundation laid at the PF Launch event, to ensure the necessary structure and expertise are in place to run the PF after RPCD concludes.

The Summit will run three full days in Rabat, Morocco. FC will also provide the meeting space. Participants will be involved in preparation before the start of the event to make them stakeholders in the activity and also help ensure their attendance. Participants will all have read the guiding principles and the charter before the Summit. The discussions for planning will take place through email exchanges and pre-conference webinars.

FC will partner with RPCD in the design, planning and implementation of the event. The Summit will be facilitated by one RPCD staff member and one FC staff member. The results of each session will be recorded by a rapporteur in text for the production of a final summary report.

During the coming quarter, RPCD will closely work with the FC team to implement a successful event.

National Workshops

National Workshops not only focus on capacity-building for Partnership Forum members, but also enhance the sustainability of the network. In this quarter, two National Workshops on Turning Research Results into Action were conducted in Jordan and Egypt. The Egypt Workshop also included a day on Sustainability of the network and of the individual organizations who comprise it.

The curricula for these workshops were developed as a result of RPCD staff and PF members traveling to the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London earlier this year for a training of trainers and translation of ODI materials on this subject in the MENA context. RPCD also enhanced the curricula with materials drawn from many sources, including IDRC.

Both workshops this quarter were held on the premises of PF members, providing cost savings and using PF participants as effective resources for the RPCD program.

Turning Research into Action – Jordan, August 27-28, 2013

The two-day workshop was facilitated by Khadija Ramram, and took place at Institute for Sustainable Development Practice (ISDP) at the Columbia Global Center in Amman, Jordan. The workshop gathered 20 PF members from research centers in Jordan. Ms. Ramram trained the participants on practical techniques to strategically market their research to potential users as they begin thinking of their research questions.

The overall feedback from the participants was very positive and indicates the workshop was a success.

Turning Research into Action & Sustainability – Egypt, September 22-23, 2013

The final workshop in the RIA series organized by RPCD in Egypt was held on September 22, 2013 in Cairo. Due to the security situation in Egypt, the program compressed two workshops into one. Beit El Karma, a PF member, co-hosted the workshop.

With the objective of building the capacity of local research institutions to connect with policy makers, the workshop gathered 10 PF members from Egyptian research institutions, and development practitioners.

Turning Research Into Action

Participants discussed challenges they face in disseminating their research results to influence policymaking.

Ms. Mariam Hanna, RPCD Deputy Director, led the session, addressing the gaps between research, communication, and development practice. The workshop also proposed different approaches and communication tools that enable researchers to translate the complex findings and conclusions of their research and studies into an accessible language to reach the greater public. The structure of the workshop allowed participants to share lessons learned and exchange experiences on the topic.

Sustainability

This component of the training was led by Mr. Alaa Shaheen, the head of Beit El Karma, who trained participants on how to identify and track research opportunities. He highlighted the necessity of forecasting business opportunities and making bidding decisions. He also included interactive exercises for participants to practice research proposal writing, and discussed criteria for winning proposals.

The second part of this component of the workshop was led by the RPCD Deputy Regional Director, to get buy-in from PF members to form a national-level information sharing hub and coordination unit in Egypt. The members agreed to have Mr. Ahmed el Asaal from AID-ME as the Egypt PF coordinator, and they agreed to hold their first independent meeting in late November at Beit El Karma. The members agreed to have “Gender” as the crosscutting theme for this meeting, where each PF member will present a current research program around the topic. The expected outcomes of this event are a formalized collaboration and synergy among PF members in running research and development programs.

ANTICIPATED ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT QUARTER

In the thirteenth quarter of RPCD, October – December 2013, a number of activities will be launched whose groundwork was laid this quarter. Expected activities include:

- Dissemination of the sixth and final volume of the Technical Paper Series
- Dissemination of the fifth and final volume of the Annotated Bibliography
- Publication of the second issue of What Works series
- Collection of results of the three research grants under the main Grants Program, five UNDP grants, and three grants resulting from the ACWUA conference, for publication in RPCD’s final quarter
- Electing the technical and steering committees
- Conducting the final five Sustainability National Workshops

- o Ramallah, West Bank October 23-24
 - o Amman, Jordan October 27-28
 - o Rabat, Morocco November 11-12
 - o Beirut, Lebanon November 20-21
 - o Erbil, Iraq TBD
- Conducting the PF Leadership Summit in Morocco, November 13-15
- Implementing 2 Webinars
- Planning for Roundtable on LGBT issues in the MENA region