



CEPPS/IFES Quarterly Report: April 1, 2005- June 30, 2005

MENA Regional Strategy

USAID Cooperative Agreement No. DGC-A-00-01-00004-00

Project Period: June 1, 2004 - August 15, 2005 (*per approval on 6/29*)

Total Budget: \$337,000.00 Expenses Recorded to Date: \$306,242

Results Summary/Impact Statement

- Completion of assessment mission in Jordan.
- Development and submission of final reports to MEPI and USAID presenting the findings of the Morocco and Algeria missions.
- Drafting of Regional Strategy report.
- Received approval for a no-cost extension, extending the project until August 15, 2005.

Background

On June 1, 2004, IFES received funding in the amount of \$287,000 from the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to develop a multi-year (2004-2007) strategy for election support for key countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) including Yemen, Oman, Jordan, Morocco and Algeria. The goal of this project is to work with election administrators, government officials, and non-governmental actors in each of the targeted countries to determine whether election support is desired, and if so, to identify the specific kind(s) of technical assistance that is needed. Since June 2004, IFES has completed strategic needs assessments in all five participating countries and has submitted separate detailed reports on its findings in Yemen, Morocco, Oman, and Algeria.

Activities

Assessment Mission to Jordan

IFES conducted an assessment of Jordanian electoral processes on March 27-April 1, 2005. During the assessment, the team gathered data from representatives of the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Political Development, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the lower and upper houses of Parliament, and Jordanian scholars to determine whether election support is desired, and if so, to identify the specific kind(s) of technical assistance that are needed. The Jordan assessment was carried out by IFES/Yemen Country Director and election expert, Dr. Paul Harris and IFES Program Officer for the MENA region, Aileen Hanel, who has country-specific expertise.

It is important to note the parameters set for the assessment mission conducted by IFES. The IFES team was instructed by its donor not to meet with individuals associated with any of Jordan's political parties, whether political party members or members of parliament who ran as independents but later aligned themselves with a party or party block upon entering parliament. Also, the IFES team was permitted to meet only with civil society organizations cleared by the

U.S. Embassy in Amman. For this reason, IFES was only able to collect limited data with respect to political parties and civil society organizations and their role in the electoral process and the process of democratization in general. Where possible, IFES has tried to fill this gap through research and discussions with political scientists and intellectuals specializing in political processes and civil society in Jordan.

As a result of the mission, IFES has made the following recommendations for reform to Jordan's electoral system:

Rule of Law

- New draft election, party, media and civil society laws should be evaluated for consistency with the relevant international standards and conventions. Administrative regulations should be checked to ensure they are consistent with the powers conferred by the laws.
- The laws concerning Jordan's civil society organizations should be reviewed to remove any impediments to the development of a vigorous CSO sector that is committed to internal democracy and that contributes to the development of a democratic culture within Jordan.

Election Administration

- Responsibility for Jordan's electoral process should be given to an independent, non-partisan election management body, separate from the Ministry of Interior.
- The procedures for receiving, considering and deciding complaints and disputes about elections should be revised to ensure they meet accepted international standards and principles.
- The number of parliamentary seats reserved for women should be increased to at least 20.
- Jordan's election authorities should undertake a thorough review of all aspects of the electoral process in consultation with a variety of groups that represent those with disabilities in order to identify and rectify the barriers to participation among Jordanians with disabilities.
- Consideration should be given to adopting a ballot paper that lists the names of candidates, together with the name and symbol of their party where applicable.
- Jordan's election authorities should commission survey research among eligible voters of all ages, genders and regions to see whether there were any disincentives to participation at the 2003 elections that can be addressed through improvements in voting procedures, in the information made available to the public, and in the nature and location of voting facilities.
- Consideration should be given to counting votes in public in order to help inform and educate the public about the electoral process and to add to its transparency.
- Jordan's government and election authorities should welcome and encourage domestic and international election observation.

Parliamentary Development

- Training programs should be provided for new members of the Chamber of Deputies, covering parliamentary procedures, the organization and work of the Chamber, and reading and evaluating legislative proposals.

A more detailed account of the Jordan mission and IFES' recommendations will be available in IFES' final assessment report.

Project no cost-extension

In June 2005, IFES received a no cost extension that extends the project until August 15, 2005. This will allow IFES enough time to complete the Jordan draft report and the Regional Strategy report presenting the overall regional findings of the five assessment missions conducted in the MENA region.

Activities Planned for Next Quarter

- Submission of draft report to MEPI and USAID presenting the findings of the Jordan assessment.
- Completion and Submission of the Regional Strategy report to MEPI and USAID.