

CEPPS/IRI QUARTERLY REPORT: January 1 – March 31, 2005
MOROCCO: POLITICAL PARTY BUILDING
USAID Cooperative Agreement No DGC-A-00-01-00004-00
Project Dates: March 2004 – September 2005
Total Budget: \$1,250,000 Expenses to Date: \$ 316,268
Project 7091

I. SUMMARY

The quarter's activities focused on three program priorities. First, IRI kicked off the first of its political party training series for local and regional level party activists in Meknes, Rabat and Casablanca. Second, field work for a benchmark public opinion poll was completed; IRI and market research firm LSM are in the final stages of compiling the statistical data to present to party leaders. Finally, IRI expanded its community action projects. IRI and Citizenship Forum launched a series of workshops and roundtables in the Casablanca districts of Sidi Moumen and Sidi Othmane.

IRI is working to strengthen party structures at the local and regional levels, improve internal democracy and communication within parties, and strengthen party outreach and membership development capabilities. IRI is also encouraging democratic reform within the parties by promoting increased transparency and accountability among elected officials and encouraging community associations to become more involved in issue advocacy and community activities.

II BACKGROUND

Having completed successive parliamentary and municipal council elections in 2002 and 2003, respectively, Morocco stands at the forefront of the Arab world for its progress along the path of democratic political reform. In a process begun under King Hassan II and accelerated under Mohammed VI, Morocco has produced both symbolic gestures and tangible results in a break with its political past. Significant expenditures devoted to voter education and registration in the period leading up to the 2002 parliamentary elections, the adoption of a party list system, and an expansion of the electorate during the 2003 municipal elections to include Moroccans 18 to 20 years of age count among the positive accomplishments the country has made over the past two years. With thirty-five women now sitting in the Moroccan parliament and a multiplicity of political parties, Morocco without a doubt deserves recognition for its progress on democratic governance.

And yet, for all of Morocco's democratic advances in recent years, the country continues to suffer from profound political challenges. Despite a history of multiparty politics, a vibrant NGO community and regular elections dating to independence in 1956, Morocco remains in many respects a liberalized autocracy. Its recent political history has also included political fragmentation by the Palace, manipulation at the ballot box, and the co-opting or removal of political opposition. The strict enforcement of electoral rules

pertaining to vote-buying in the 2002 parliamentary election should have generated increased optimism among voters. Nevertheless, Morocco's historic secular political parties have proven incapable of seizing upon reform opportunities and voter turnout remains at levels witnessed during elections that were not democratic.

Plagued by sclerotic leadership and consumed with factional infighting, Morocco's traditional political parties remain primarily personality and patronage based organizations, lacking coherent platforms. Few parties practice democracy internally and many party activists at the local and provincial levels complain about the undemocratic nature of decision-making within parties and their lack of input in the selection of party office holders, candidates, or platform development. This situation has produced growing apathy on the part of the public towards political participation and the view that political parties are instruments of corruption and nepotism. In public opinion polling conducted by IRI prior to the 2002 parliamentary elections only 5% of Moroccans identified themselves as party members. A further 68% said they did not know what distinguished one party from another, and only 21% believed that political party platforms and programs reflected the needs and priorities of the Moroccan public.

IRI believes there is political will at the highest levels to institute democratic reform in Morocco. Because Morocco has a monarchic system of government the deepening of democratic norms can potentially have significant demonstrative value elsewhere in the region. However, the extent to which the space for political participation is further broadened depends in large part on the ability of political parties and other elements of Moroccan civil society to come to the fore as responsible and transparent democratic actors.

Current Political Dynamics in Morocco

Despite a contested race between USFP and Istiqlal, Abdelouahed Radi retained his leadership position in parliament on the opening day of the April parliamentary session. The contest between USFP and Istiqlal for the parliamentary presidency surprised many in the political arena, including USFP leader El Yazghi, and will greatly impact Koutla relations as the 2007 elections approach. The PPS, meanwhile, is working to unite the smaller leftist political parties, such as the newly formed Gauche Socialist Unifie and the Parti Nationale Democrate.

The government has presented the finalized draft of the political party reform law during the quarter, which will be debated in April in parliament. The law promotes increased transparency in the functioning of political parties, and provides for public financing of day-to-day operations of the parties represented in parliament. The role of the Ministry of the Interior, once prominent in the draft proposal, has been reduced, in favor of the judicial system.

The Popular Movement political parties – MNP, MP, and UD – continue their negotiations for a political coalition. The parties have not yet come to agreement on whether the three parties will fusion or simply form a federation. The Alliance des

Liberties, led by Ali Belhaj, is in negotiations with the UMP parties towards an eventual federation.

RNI continues to experience significant internal disputes, questioning party leader Mr. Osman's leadership and financial transparency. Osman appears to have the support of the government, and will most likely retain his position despite the party's continued criticism of his leadership.

The PJD has continued its high profile among constituents and potential supporters, as the party has embarked on a caravan crossing the south of Morocco to promote the party and recruit new members. The party also sent a delegation of 30 local and national leaders to Istanbul for meetings and consultation with their Turkish counterparts on local governance issues.

Algeria has lifted visa requirements for Moroccans to visit Algeria. President Boutaflika has been invited by King Mohammed VI to visit Morocco on April 13 for celebrations for the prince's circumcision. There is much speculation on increased diplomatic activity between Algeria and Morocco, and whether border restrictions will be lifted.

III. QUARTERLY ACTIVITIES

IRI Activities

During the quarter, IRI continued to build relations with political party officials from all of the major parties represented in parliament, as well as several smaller, reform-minded parties. IRI Country Director Sarah Johnson met with the top leadership of several parties – PJD, USFP, ADL, MNP, UD, and the PRE – and confirmed their interest and engagement in IRI training programs and local governance activities.

IRI continues to facilitate relations with Casablanca local officials, including the wali, council presidents in Sidi Moumen and Sidi Othmane, and the president of the regional council, as well as collaborating with local development associations active in impoverished areas of the city.

Training

This quarter IRI held the first round of political party member training sessions, conducting training sessions for nine political parties. The first round of training, which targeted local and regional elected officials, and national-level election coordinators, focused on helping political party activists and elected officials to begin to develop strong strategic and organizational plans for the 2007 elections. The intensive sessions covered party structure and organizational planning, internal communications, message development, media strategy and voter outreach. The trainings received positive feedback from the participants as well as party leadership. Two of the four sessions (UMP and ADL) were covered by national TV and local media. All of the parties requested follow-on training.

MNP/MP/UD: IRI's first training session was held in Meknes, with broad participation from all three political parties in the UMP federation. Approximately 30-35 local and regional elected officials and party election coordinators participated in the two-day session, which was led by Dan Gurley, RNC field director for the 2004 Bush campaign, and Eric Sutton, former Maryland and Delaware Republican State Party Executive Director. Party officials and participants alike were very pleased with the results, and requested additional follow-on training. Four participants were selected by the parties as internal trainers to present the information to local officials and party members who were unable to participate in the training sessions.

PER: Approximately 50 municipal elected officials and party officers attended this one-day power session in Rabat. Participation was lively and interactive, with a good dialogue between the trainers and the party members of the newly formed PER. IRI covered party structure and organizational planning, message development, volunteer recruitment, and voter outreach. The PER is implementing internal training sessions based on the training materials .

USFP/PI/PPS/GSU: Due to previously unknown scheduling conflicts with PPS and USFP activities, there was lower than expected turnout for this training session. Approximately 20 PI, USFP and GSU (Gauche Socialist Union) participated in the two-day training, which was led by Christine Dudley, the mid-west regional director for the Republican National Committee and Brian Christianson, the former Executive Director at the Wisconsin Republican Party. Again the participants' feedback was largely positive. This training gave IRI its first opening with the GSU, a new political party (break off from the USFP).

ADL: Approximately 35 people, ranging in stature from local coordinators to high-level party officials, attended the full-day session at the party's headquarters in Casablanca. Topics covered included organizational planning, party structure, communications outreach, message development, and electoral list development.

One-on-one consultations with party leadership

As noted above, IRI has been successful in increasing relations with the top political leadership in Morocco, and has met with the secretary generals of several parties on a regular basis. These meetings provide an opportunity for IRI to engage the party leadership on issues related to platform formation, internal transparency, party activities, voter outreach and advance preparations for the 2007 elections, as well as IRI training programs and conferences. IRI has benefited from the openings provided by the proposed law on political party reform to engage political leaders on several potentially sensitive topics, and encourage party officials to take steps to democratize their organizations internally. In the coming quarter, IRI will engage party leaders on the results of the baseline political poll conducted by the Institute.

Polling

IRI has been working with LMS Marketing, a respected Moroccan polling firm, to complete the first of three public opinion polls. This poll will provide statistical benchmarks to measure the level of public participation in the political process and popular attitudes towards political parties and the political environment over the life of the program. IRI Country Director Sarah Johnson will present the data to the top leadership of several political parties, and use results to sensitize political leaders to the importance of political reform and constituent outreach. IRI will then conduct training sessions for party activists charged with communications and outreach, in order to assist parties in developing more modern communication and recruitment techniques.

The poll questionnaire contains a wide variety of questions related to potential political reforms, citizen participation and awareness of political issues and parties, as well as the standing of political parties on several policy issues. The results should give the political parties a more in-depth understanding of their voter base, while revealing potential reasons for political apathy on the part of the Moroccan population. The field work, which covered 13 Moroccan provinces, was conducted in March. In cooperation with the polling firm, LSM, IRI is currently evaluating the rough results and proper weighting procedures, and working with LMS to develop cross tabs and banner booklets to provide a detailed look at Morocco's current political dynamics.

Community action projects

IRI's local governance program is moving forward in Casablanca. The first in a series of twelve workshops was held in February, in Sidi Moumen, drawing over 60 community activists and communal council representatives to discuss local development priorities. Council officials are engaged in and enthusiastic about the program. Based on the results, the council is providing increased meeting space, transportation subsidies, and logistical support to local associations. Collaboration and communication between the council members and local associations are increasing. Sidi Moumen's second workshop in May will evaluate potential improvements and facilitate increased cooperation on larger development issues and local development projects.

Coordination is underway for the second workshop, which will take place in Sidi Othmane in April. IRI and CF have facilitated meetings with several NGOs located in the community, as well as representatives of the communal council. IRI is now facilitating the creation of a joint committee, with NGO and council representatives in Sidi Othmane, to oversee the planning and implementation of local development projects, as well as the community's participation in the greater Casablanca development program. IRI has been requested to facilitate the creation of an NGO network, similar to the Sidi Moumen Association, in Sidi Othmane.

The second round table is scheduled for April 28; coordination meetings with local, regional and national government officials involved in territorial planning and development are underway. The wali and regional council representatives have agreed to participate fully in the program.

Parliamentary Journal

IRI has been exploring the possibility of creating a managing board, with representation from several organizations to manage the project, with oversight from a single association. The Institute has identified several associations who are working in good governance and democracy. IRI has held meetings with association leaders to assess capacity to manage the journal. Several associations that could participate on a managing board, giving it more credibility on the local level, have been identified. IRI is also meeting with parliamentary groups to explain project and engage parliamentarians.

IV. EVALUATION/RESULTS

Result #1: To reform established political parties and to strengthen nascent democratic political parties to make them more democratic, transparent, representative and effective.

- IRI provided training for local and provincial elected officials, leaders, and activists. The first of these training ended the first week of February with the Koutla parties, the three Berber parties, PER and ADL. These trainings targeted local and regional party activists with training in communications, message and outreach.
- IRI Director Sarah Johnson conducted several one-on-one consultations with party leadership, engaging officials from several political parties on the potential impact of the political party reform legislation. IRI used this opportunity to stress the importance of democratic processes in regards to platform formation and party organization, as well as to discuss the parties' internal structures and internal communication processes.

Result #2: To expand democratic political participation and encourage more competitive multiparty systems.

- IRI conducted the first in a series of training sessions for local and regional political activists on voter outreach, external communications and targeting strategies. These sessions helped train party activists to target potential supporters and conduct outreach activities to increase their grassroots support. Through increased outreach and targeted voter contact, political parties will increase their responsiveness to the needs of the citizens they represent, and create a more competitive political environment on a grassroots level.
- IRI's baseline poll measures the level of public participation in the political process and popular attitudes towards political parties and the political environment. IRI will present the data to the parties to enable political reform and constituent outreach.

Result #3: To increase the governance skills of political leaders and representatives in national and local level bodies through training and strengthening parliamentary blocs or caucuses.

- IRI is providing hands-on assistance and conducting trainings with its partner Citizenship Forum, to increase the responsiveness of local government officials at the district, city and provincial levels to the priorities of specific communities, and develop community-wide development plans for the Greater Casablanca region. IRI and CF have completed the first of twelve workshops, and have initiated contact with and engaged local NGOs and public officials at all levels to participate in its municipal governance program.

V. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Training

IRI is preparing the second round of local and regional trainings, which will take place in Marrakech on May 6-8. Several political parties, including USFP, Istiqlal, ADL, PPS, MNP, MP, and UD, have confirmed their intention to participate. The trainings will be one-day intensive sessions for each coalition or party bloc, and assist the parties in their preparations for the upcoming electoral period. The sessions will cover communications, voter outreach, political and strategic planning, electoral list development and local party organization, as well as other pre-election-related issues. Each party has agreed to identify four individuals to serve as internal trainers, and disseminate the training information to a broader audience within the party structures following the group sessions.

IRI is also preparing follow-on trainings to the Tunis PIP conference on women's leadership. These sessions, which will target female activists and political party members in Morocco, will take place in mid-June.

Polling

IRI will coordinate a series of individual party training sessions on the polling results as soon as the data processing is completed. All of the parties have been receptive to half-day training sessions with the party leadership, as well as follow on training with party activists involved in communication, outreach and voter contact.

Community Action Project

IRI and Citizenship Forum will host the second arrondissement workshop April 19 in Sidi Othmane. IRI met with several NGO leaders to discuss the formation of a network in the district, and the creation of a joint committee with district council members. CF is planning a meeting with the commune council president, after which IRI will meet with a several other council officials, to facilitate the workshop and the oversight committee. IRI and CF are aiming to hold two activities (one workshop, one roundtable) each month until July. The next roundtable is planned for April 28, and will cover the current greater Casablanca development plans with representation from the Ministry for Territorial Planning, as well as several local officials.

Party Strengthening

IRI has invited members of the Turkish Islamist party, the AK, to Morocco for a multi-party conference in mid-May. Both AK party members and Moroccan party leaders responded positively to the exchange. IRI will hold a multiparty conference to facilitate an exchange of ideas regarding Turkey's democratic development in parallel to Morocco, and the Turkish leaders' experiences. They will discuss the role of opposition parties in government and their transition into government. IRI will facilitate side meetings for AK party members with PJD party officials to discuss the challenges of operating a party with Islamic influences in a secular system, as well as their experience as an opposition party.