



CEPPS/NDI Quarterly Report: April 1 – June 30, 2005

**LEBANON: Election Monitoring (05868)
USAID Cooperative Agreement No. DGC-A-00-01-00004-00**

**Project dates: April 1, 2005 to September 30, 2005
Total budget: \$390,000.00 Total spent to date: \$216,898.04**

I. SUMMARY

Unable to form a national unity government, Prime Minister Omar Karami resigned on April 13, 2005 and was replaced by moderate pro-Syrian businessman Najib Mikati. Mikati immediately named a 14-member non-parliamentarian government to oversee the country in the run-up to legislative elections, which the caretaker government set to start on May 29. Over the course of four consecutive Sundays, voters went to the polls for the first time absent the presence of Syrian troops in more than three decades.

A number of factors have contributed to historically low voter confidence in election processes in Lebanon including Syrian pressure and manipulation on candidates and voters, the redrafting of the electoral law at each election, the continued dominance of partisan media at election time, and the absence of an independent body to manage elections. While reform has been slow in coming, civil society organizations have made incremental gains in recent years. The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) has, over 10 years, gained substantial credibility as an independent election monitoring organization and as a non-partisan voice in a much divided society.

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is conducting a six-month program to promote a democratic electoral process and to encourage citizen participation through domestic election monitoring. NDI identified the following objectives:

- Strengthen the capacity of Lebanese civil society organizations to monitor the integrity of the electoral process and effectively communicate their findings to the Lebanese public and international community; and
- Foster regional cooperation in support of democratic development by encouraging the establishment of a regional election monitoring network.

During this reporting period, NDI conducted the following activities:

- Issued a subgrant to LADE to recruit, train and deploy a large network of volunteer observers to monitor the integrity of the electoral process;
- Assisted LADE through technical consultations to design media strategies, manage financial resources and implement the election observation effort prior, during and after the elections; and
- Met with local and international groups working on elections-related activities to ensure coordination and efficient use of resources.

II. BACKGROUND

Unable to form a national unity government to oversee the country in the run-up to legislative elections, Prime Minister Omar Karami resigned on April 13, 2005. Two days later, President Emile Lahoud appointed moderate pro-Syrian businessman Najib Mikati prime minister. Mikati quickly formed a 14-member non-parliamentarian cabinet to oversee the country in the run-up to legislative elections. The formation of this neutral caretaker Cabinet made up of technocrats not running for office ended two months of political deadlock during which Lebanon had been without a government. Mikati's government set a May 29 start date for elections, which were scheduled to take place over four consecutive Sundays, and parliament voted to extend its mandate through the end of the election cycle. Unable to reach a consensus on a new electoral framework, the government defaulted to the use of the 2000 electoral law, leaving many parties dissatisfied, but allowing for elections to be held without delay.

As a result of the 2005 legislative elections, an opposition alliance led by Saad Hariri, the son of late former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, and Walid Jumblatt, leader of the Democratic Gathering, won an absolute majority of seats in parliament. The Hariri-Jumblatt opposition alliance claimed 72 of the 128 contested seats in the first elections held in the aftermath of Syria's withdrawal, ending nearly two decades of legislative control by pro-Syrian politicians. Meanwhile, an alliance between Lebanon's two largest Shia groups, Hezbollah and Amal Movement, won 35 seats, mainly in the predominantly Shia-populated South. Candidate lists in the mainly Christian Mount Lebanon region led by General Michel Aoun, who recently returned to Lebanon on May 7 after fifteen years in exile, claimed the remaining 21 seats.

Following the elections, Prime Minister Mikati and his caretaker government stepped down and President Lahoud appointed former finance minister Fuad Siniora as the new prime minister. Siniora received the support of 126 of 128 members of parliament to preside over the first Lebanese Cabinet to take office government without the presence of Syrian troops in three decades. Meanwhile, Amal Movement leader Nabih Berri was re-elected as parliamentary speaker for a fourth consecutive term. Berri received the support of 90 legislators to retain the speaker's post, which is the highest position reserved for a Shi'ite under the constitution. The new Lebanese government and parliament will be responsible for introducing and implementing a number of reform

initiatives, including a new electoral framework, measures aimed at ending corruption, improving the economy, and restructuring the country's security system.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

During this period, NDI conducted the following activities:

- Issued a subgrant to LADE to recruit, train and deploy a large network of volunteer observers to monitor the integrity of the electoral process;
- Assisted LADE through technical consultations to design media strategies, manage financial resources and implement the election observation effort prior, during and after the elections; and
- Met with local and international groups working on elections-related activities to ensure coordination and efficient use of resources.

Subgrant to LADE

NDI issued a \$200,000 subgrant to LADE to monitor the electoral process and train, deploy, and equip approximately 1,000 volunteer observers on election days. NDI's DC-based Senior Subgrants Administrator travelled to Beirut from May 3 to May 8 to finalize the terms of the agreement between NDI and LADE and assist LADE in understanding and developing efficient mechanisms to implement NDI accounting procedures.

NDI's subgrant to LADE allowed the organization to purchase news broadcasts, bulletins, and political programs on television, radio, newspapers for media monitoring and analysis. LADE's media monitoring effort covered one month of audiovisual media (approximately 4500 TV hours and 4500 radio hours) and six months of newspaper monitoring (1800 newspapers). In addition, NDI coordinated the sharing of media monitoring analysis produced by Internews/Statistics Lebanon in a custom-made search engine. LADE is currently in the process of drafting a report detailing their findings from the media monitoring effort.

Technical Elections Monitoring Support

NDI provided technical assistance to LADE to help them conduct a nationwide monitoring effort. Through regular consultations, the Institute worked closely with LADE to coordinate and strengthen its existing volunteer network and build its capacity to monitor the elections.

NDI's Jerusalem-based Resident Senior Elections Program Officer travelled to Beirut from May 13 to May 16 to meet with LADE to assess the organization's technical needs and make concrete suggestions on ways the organization could enhance its monitoring efforts without burdening its capacity. Mr. Pran detailed quantitative research methods for testing the following: 1) the process of issuing voter cards, 2) the use of party vs. voter ballots; 3) the secrecy of voting through the use of the curtain, and 4) the

percentage of invalidated ballots. He also provided sample templates of vote tabulation sheets, which LADE utilized and adapted to facilitate their reporting and analysis.

Through NDI's assistance, LADE was able to expand its presence throughout the country and build an extensive domestic monitoring network. LADE improved its Beirut headquarters and set up nine regional offices throughout Lebanon to better coordinate recruitment, trainings, deployment and reporting. To increase volunteer numbers, LADE brought together 37 organizations under the umbrella of the Lebanese Coalition for the Observation for Elections (CLOE). Each member organization signed a code of conduct acknowledging LADE's leadership role in the coalition and committing volunteers to the organization's deployment plan.

LADE trained 1,150 observers by the end of the election cycle and deployed on average 500 observers on each of the four election days. In addition, LADE trained 4,000 candidate and party agents. For the first time since its inception 10 years ago, LADE received formal recognition as a domestic, non-partisan monitoring group from the Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Justice. One hundred fifty LADE observers received official authorization from the Ministry of the Interior to enter polling stations on election days. After each election round, LADE drafted preliminary statements of observer findings and disseminated them via their website, which was maintained through NDI's assistance. In addition, LADE Secretary General Ziyad Baroud appeared every election night on a locally and internationally diffused elections de-brief talk show with other experts on the Lebanese Broadcast Company (LBC). In conjunction with LADE's national media campaigns, these appearances increased LADE's visibility and credibility throughout the elections. LADE is currently in the process of drafting a final report detailing observer findings from throughout the election cycle.

In addition to training volunteers, LADE produced maps using districting software purchased with the help of NDI, and published all components of an observers' toolkit for Election Day. LADE's toolkit included:

- Election law
- Monitoring guide
- Voter's reference guide
- Candidate's guide
- Contact list
- Quick tips for observers
- Disposable cameras
- Flashlight
- Mobile phone recharge card
- Maps
- Stationary

On Election Day, volunteers wore identification cards and vests displaying the LADE logo, the name of the coalition and the word "observer" in Arabic and English.

Elections Coordination Meetings

NDI met with local and international groups working on elections-related activities to ensure coordination and efficient use of resources:

- **CODEL Meeting.** NDI Senior Advisor Joseph Hall presented a summary of NDI's elections work at a high-level briefing held at the US Embassy in Beirut on May 28 for US Senators John McCain, John Sununu and Lindsey Graham.
- **CEPPS Partners.** NDI met with representatives from IFES and the International Republican Institute (IRI) as well as USAID and the US Embassy each Monday after election days to coordinate elections-related activities and determine whether any issues from the previous round required special attention.
- **European Union.** NDI met with various representatives from the European Union's election observation mission, including delegation leaders and elections experts, to discuss political and technical developments and coordinate activities related to LADE.
- **United Nations.** NDI met with Carina Perelli, Chief of the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division, and Scott Smith, Public Affairs Officer, to discuss prospects of the new government inviting the UN team to head electoral reform.
- **Embassy of Canada.** NDI met with Canadian Ambassador Michel Duval and Senator Mac Harb, who led an independent Canadian elections observation team. NDI briefed Senator Harb on the key players and political factors affecting the elections.

IV. RESULTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Objective #1: Strengthen the capacity of the Lebanese civil society organizations to monitor the integrity of the electoral process and effectively communicate their findings to the Lebanese public and international community.

- NDI's subgrant allowed LADE to open and run 9 regional offices throughout the country and refurbish its Beirut headquarters.
- Through NDI assistance, LADE was able to professionalize a part of its all-volunteer operations during the elections in order to ensure a quality monitoring effort as well as timely response to developments and external queries.
- With NDI's assistance, LADE coordinated the efforts of 37 organizations under the umbrella of the Coalition for the Observation for Elections (CLOE).
- With NDI's assistance, LADE trained 1,150 observers by the end of the election cycle and deployed on average 500 observers on each election day. In addition, LADE trained 4,000 candidate and party agents.
- Through sample templates of observation tabulation sheets provided by NDI, LADE was able to develop observer forms to facilitate their reporting and analysis.
- LADE produced maps using districting software purchased with the help of NDI, and produced all components of the observers' toolkits and uniforms for election day.

- Following each round of elections, LADE drafted preliminary statements of observer findings and disseminated them via their website, which was updated and maintained with the help of NDI.
- NDI's subgrant to LADE allowed the organization to purchase news broadcasts, bulletins, and political programs on television, radio, newspapers for media monitoring and analysis.
- LADE is producing a comprehensive final elections observation report in Arabic, English and French scheduled to be released in mid-August.

V. EVALUATION

LADE observation efforts during the 2005 legislative elections were generally successful. The organization was able to train 1,150 observers, surpassing the goal of 1,000 set out in NDI's proposal. The establishment of nine regional offices (three more than originally planned) as well as the Lebanese Coalition for the Observing of Elections (CLOE) made up of 37 member organizations helped LADE field a demographically, geographically and confessionally diverse group of volunteer observers. LADE was responsive to national and international media calls and, through regular press conferences and appearances, the organization increased national awareness of its independent monitoring efforts. In addition, LADE must be recognized for its persistent lobbying of the government, which resulted in the organization earning independent observer status from both the Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Justice for the first time in 10 years.

Following each election round, LADE drafted statements of observer findings and disseminated them via their website. For technical reasons, the fourth round has not been uploaded. While these statements were informative, they also tended to be political in nature. In each of the statements, LADE prefaced its findings with criticism of the 2000 electoral law, although criticism appeared to be more tempered in the third statement than in the previous two.

Some members of LADE's General Assembly expressed their apprehension with accepting funding from a US organization to conduct activities. In one instance, a member of the committee contacted NDI-DC staff directly to inquire about the funding. LADE's board held three General Assembly meetings during the course of the parliamentary elections openly addressing the issue of NDI funding and members' concerns.

LADE's board members, especially Secretary General Ziyad Baroud and some LADE volunteer observers, expressed their thanks to NDI for the assistance the Institute provided in terms of technical support and overall coordination. Most board members including Executive Director Doreen Khoury and Treasurer Walid Fakherddine cited the assistance provided by NDI's Resident Senior Program Officer for Elections Vladimir Pran as integral to the overall success of the monitoring effort.

LADE is currently working on its Final Report, which is due to be released in mid-August. Afterwards, LADE will hold a General Assembly meeting to conduct an intensive evaluation of the monitoring effort, donor relations, and general organization. Given the all-volunteer nature of the organization, LADE will need to decide at this time whether to professionalize part of its operation in order to better maintain institutional memory and play a significant role in shaping the electoral law reform debate. NDI will continue to assist and consult LADE through this transitional period.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

In the next quarter, LADE, in coordination with NDI, will release a final report evaluating the electoral process and LADE's election observation. The report will be shared with political parties and civic organizations, USAID, MEPI and possibly the media.