



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

West Bank and Gaza: Political Party Development and Campaign Training (04865) USAID Cooperative Agreement No. DGC-A-00-01-00004-00

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I. SUMMARY

NDI's political party program activities took on new urgency this quarter as parties prepared for the second round of municipal elections and began planning for upcoming legislative elections. Although legislative elections have since been postponed, the promise of national elections in the near future (likely January 2006) has galvanized the parties and has lent a new energy and an increased demand to the Institute's workshops and consultations. It has also given NDI an opening to begin discussing electoral strategy – both with Fatah, whose members and leaders could benefit from a better technical understanding of the electoral system and how to use the system to maximize their chance of victory, as well as with the smaller parties, who are currently in discussion about forming a “third trend” electoral coalition.

In preparation for municipal elections in May, the Institute conducted a series of trainings for both local council candidates and for party pollwatchers. Both sets of workshops were conducted with NDI's party partners in the West Bank and Gaza and were conducted in response to party leaders' requests. Both sets of trainings built on the work previous done with party campaign managers in March, to help the parties create complete internal structures for the elections. In celebration of Palestinian Democracy Day and in cooperation with the Palestinian Legislative Council, NDI also held a workshop on increasing women's political participation in Ramallah in which 35 civic and political activists participated.

In May, NDI conducted an assessment of its ongoing party program. With changes in the election law and political landscape anticipated, this evaluation was conducted in order to improve future programming and its relevance to NDI's partners. Based on the results of the second round of municipal elections, the Institute also built an elections database to compile candidate and party information and results for each municipality and governorate in the West Bank and Gaza. This information will be shared with our party partners to develop future electoral strategy. The Institute also began working with a local NGO partner to introduce and develop an electoral code of conduct for Palestinian political parties. This idea follows on a recommendation in NDI's Final Report on the January 20, 2005 Presidential Elections and concerns over problems in the challenges process after the second round of local elections in May 2005.

Finally, in June, NDI's new resident program officer for political party programs, Emily Harding, arrived in Jerusalem. Ms. Harding will be assuming responsibility for NDI's political party programming for at least the next year.

II. BACKGROUND

Legislative elections, originally scheduled for July 17, were delayed by Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas on June 4, 2005. It is still unclear when polling will be held, but it is expected that Abbas will call for a vote before or during January 2006.

The timing of the elections is of particular interest to Fatah leadership who are concerned that their chances of electoral success could increase with more time to allow security services to maintain order and a chance to achieve tangible success in the peace process.

On a practical level, Abbas had to postpone the event because new legislation governing national elections was not complete. The new law, which has been under debate for almost a year, makes significant changes to the electoral system. On Saturday, 18 June, the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) addressed and approved amendments to the election law submitted by Abbas. The current version of the law includes the following:

- The number of the seats in the PLC is increased from 88 to 132.
- Half of these seats will be determined by proportional representation through national closed lists
- Half of these seats will be determined by the current constituency system (e.g., candidates stand as individuals and if there are six seats in an electoral district, the voter gets to select up to six candidates).
- The civil registry was removed as a potential source of verifying voter eligibility
- A 20% quota for women candidates will be enforced for the national proportional representation lists.
- The minimum age for candidates is 28.

This arrangement, as well as the July date for elections, was agreed upon by the Palestinian factions in talks in Egypt earlier this year. Subsequent disputes within Fatah over whether this system offered the movement and individual PLC members the best political protection created delays in passage, thus contributing to postponing the legislative elections. Hamas, Fatah's main political rival, was highly vocal in its critique of the governing party for its failure to adhere to agreed dates and deadlines. Tension between Fatah and Hamas has been growing in recent months, and was particularly high after results from the second round of local elections were disputed in four districts.

A lack of legislative elections has not meant a lack of electoral activity. Local elections, which are being held in three rounds from December 2004 to December 2005, continued in this quarter. The second round of local elections was held in 84 districts in the West Bank and Gaza on May 5, 2005.

Having learned some lessons in the first round of local elections, where institutional parties such as Fatah faced a very real challenge, the parties and factions prepared vigorously for this set of polls. Campaigning was better organized and more proactive than it had been in the first round, particularly by Fatah in Gaza. The smaller parties, such as Popular Struggle Front (PSF), the Palestinian Democratic Union (FIDA), the Palestinian People's Party (PPP), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and the Palestinian National Initiative (PNI) entered into coalitions in a number of areas in an attempt to pool resources.

The results of these elections, however, are a matter of some debate. Local elections are organized by the Higher Committee for Local Elections (HCLE), an institution of the Palestinian Authority (PA). The HCLE announced the results according to the name of individual candidates and declined to offer official results based on political affiliation. As such, the HCLE did not make any announcements that clarified which political organizations made gains, and which suffered losses, in the elections.

Based on analyses by NDI and a number of independent observers, Fatah-affiliated candidates appear to have won control of the highest number of local councils, but Hamas candidates won the highest number of seats, taking control of councils in major population centers.

However, election results were challenged in the four localities, one in the West Bank and three in Gaza. In the Gaza districts – Rafah, Beit Lahiya and Al Breej – the official vote count declared Hamas the winner, thus wresting control from Fatah, which expected to maintain power in these areas. Indeed, Fatah put particular focus and effort on each of these areas in its campaigning and throughout the counting on the night of the elections, expected to retain control of these districts. The results in Rafah were particularly close. In Attara in the West Bank, armed men affiliated with Fatah broke into the polling station during the vote count and burned two of the ballot boxes, thus halting the counting process.¹

The disputed results increased tensions between the two organizations, which were already high in Gaza because of small conflicts throughout the campaign period. The official challenges process as administered by the HCLE did not improve the situation. The HCLE and the courts are viewed by Hamas as arms of the PA, which is controlled by Fatah. Hamas complained that the neither body – the HCLE in particular – was able to rule on the complaints and challenges process in an impartial manner. A rerun of the elections in Attara, Rafah, Beit Lahiya and Al Breej, scheduled for June 1, was cancelled when Hamas pulled out of the elections the night before polling, complaining that Fatah had violated an agreement on the process and it would not be possible for the vote to be administered fairly. Clashes between the two organizations followed and tensions remain high. The reruns have not yet been rescheduled.

The smaller political parties won only a handful of seats in the second round of local elections. In a review of their performance with NDI, party leaders complained of a lack of resources and an inability to effectively mobilize local coalitions. The parties affiliated with the Palestinian

¹ For more information, see NDI's report on findings and recommendations from the second round of local elections in the West Bank and Gaza.

Liberation Organization (PLO) have been cut off from most PLO funding since the beginning of the year.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

The following program activities were designed to build on the work the Institute had conducted in the last quarter, particularly trainings and preparation of political party campaign managers. The objective of these activities is to assist the parties in building skillful, experienced and effective activists and the internal structures that allow them to respond to the requests and demands of voters and compete effectively in elections, thus offering voters a more diverse choice of political ideals and democratic options in governing.

Candidate Trainings, April 5 to 17

From April 5 to 17, NDI conducted seven two-day candidate trainings in the West Bank and Gaza for its four political party partners. Conducted by David Rose, deputy leader of the Progressive Unionist Party of Northern Ireland who has been responsible for preparing his own party's candidates for elections, these trainings focused on the primary role of the candidate in a campaign: effective outreach to and communication with voters.

Participants were asked to start by identifying their priorities as candidates. What did they hope to achieve in this election? How many votes would they need to win a seat? How many voters would they have to speak to secure these votes? Where would they find these voters and what would be the most effective means of communicating with them? How would they manage their time between now and election day?

With priorities and goals established, participants focused on the various means of communication available to them, the impact of each of these methods on voters, and their own individual messages and communication skills. Each candidate wrote a short speech and practiced delivering it in front of their colleagues. Every speech was recorded and the participant was given direct feedback from the trainer and other participants, and also instructed to watch his or her own tape privately to critique their own presentation and communication styles. Candidates went through mock interviews with a journalist to prepare them for communicating through the media as well.

Each participant was given a copy of NDI's manual on campaign planning in Arabic, as well as three workbooks on preparing for elections as a candidate which were designed by the trainer.

Trainings were conducted in Gaza with FIDA, PSF, PPP and Fatah. In the West Bank trainings were conducted with FIDA, PSF and PPP. Fatah in the West Bank was having a difficult time defining who its endorsed candidates were, and thus did not participate in the workshop.

Election Assessment for Fatah Gaza, April 17 to 22

From April 17 to 22, NDI Senior Advisor and former Canadian cabinet minister Ross Reid conducted an assessment of Fatah's performance in the first round of local elections and made a number of recommendations on how the organization could improve its results in subsequent polls. The evaluation was conducted at the request of Fatah's Gaza leadership as the movement seeks to modernize and streamline its structures in preparation for additional local elections as well as upcoming legislative elections.

Mr. Reid made a number of recommendations regarding the organization's internal communication and campaign management structures, as well as decision-making processes involving selection of candidates and senior campaign staff. Mr. Reid found that the organization had made some important changes recently, but they were not likely to have an impact on the second round of local elections because they were so new.

Among other things, Mr. Reid suggested that the organization construct a long-term strategy for party and membership development to bring back former supporters, now disenchanted with the governing party, and increase Fatah's access to its voters and to the human resources required to field a competitive campaign on a national level.

The Role of Women in Political Life: Celebrating Democracy Day, April 18

At the request and invitation of the PLC, NDI joined in celebrating Palestinian "Democracy Day" by conducting a workshop on increasing and supporting the role of women in political and public life. The training focused on practical steps that could be taken by individuals and organizations interested in promoting women as candidates and political and community leaders.

Held in Ramallah, participants included 31 women and four men from the PLC, women's organizations, unions and other NGOs from throughout the West Bank. The session was conducted by Samantha Smoot, NDI Senior Program Manager in Lebanon and NDI West Bank and Gaza Director Shannon O'Connell.

The workshop began with an exploration of the arguments surrounding the role of women as candidates and leaders, and why it is valuable to any society to insure that women have the opportunity to participate equally. The training then moved to sessions on obstacles Palestinian women face and how they can overcome them, how candidates figure out exactly which voters would support them, how to develop a message for these voters and how to deliver that message in the most effective manner possible.

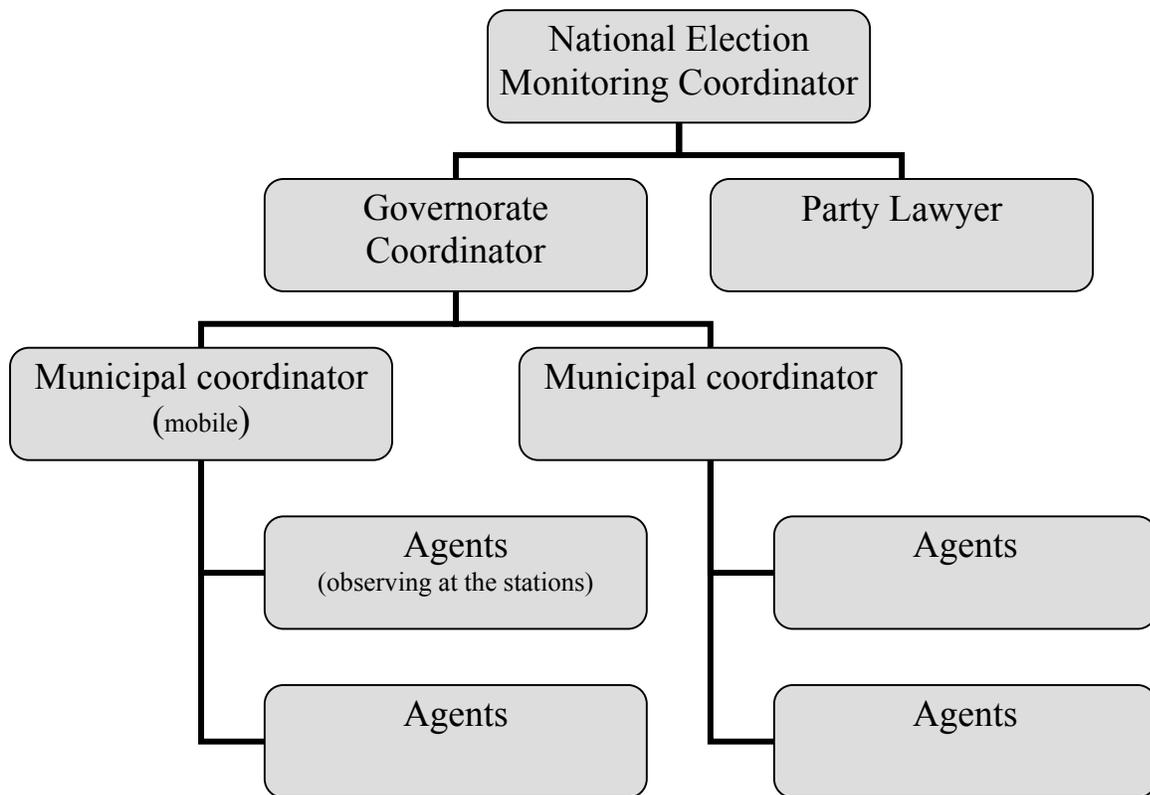
Participants were each given copies of NDI's campaign planning manual in Arabic, as well as copies of a short film on DVD recently produced by the Institute featuring challenges and opportunities for women candidates in a number of countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

Local Election Monitors Trainings, April 25 to May 2

In preparation for the second round of local elections in May, NDI conducted a series of workshops for its political party partners in the West Bank and Gaza on how parties organize and

prepare for election observation. These workshops were requested by party leaders, who expressed concern about the performance of party observers in the first round of municipal elections, particularly in Gaza. In spite of the closures for the Passover holiday in the West Bank and Gaza, the workshops went ahead as planned, with some participants traveling for more than eight hours through numerous checkpoints to reach the training site.

In preparation for the workshops, NDI West Bank and Gaza Director Shannon O’Connell, Elections Officer Vladimir Pran and Political Party Program Officer Ghadeer Dajani held a series of consultations with party leaders on how their internal structures should be organized on election day for purpose of fielding observers, collecting information from them in real time and submitting challenges and complaints as quickly as possible, if necessary. Party leaders received briefing papers on organizational structures for observation and were encouraged to create a system similar to the following:



The consultations assisted party leaders in identifying who the ideal participants would be for the subsequent workshops. Mr. Niti Shehu, elections expert from the NDI Kosovo office, conducted these workshops, discussing with participants the rights and responsibilities of observers; providing a step-by-step walk through of election day procedures, violations and how to file complaints; and the fundamentals of party reporting and internal party communications in relation to the observation process.

Under the direction of the NDI West Bank and Gaza elections team, the Institute produced an election observer’s kit for each party participant. The kit contained: 1) a training module for

training other observers in the party; 2) a copy of election day procedures, as published by the Higher Committee for Local Elections; 3) a list of issues and anticipated electoral problems to watch out for during the local elections; and 4) some examples internal party reporting forms. NDI also included a handout of all of the localities where the elections are going to be held, the polling center numbers and their locations.

Political Party Program Evaluation and Planning, May 12 to June 3

In May, NDI consultant Damian Murphy joined the West Bank and Gaza team to conduct an assessment of the Institute's ongoing political party program and assist in program planning. With growing demand for program activity from partners, as well as changes in the election law and political landscape, Mr. Murphy was asked to examine recent program activities and their effectiveness, and outline options and suggestions for meeting requests for additional activities from partners, creating advanced materials for program partners, finding new ways to reach out to youth and women, and insure that the program had sufficient systems in place to follow-up with past and current program participants.

Mr. Murphy and Program Officer Ghadeer Dajani conducted consultations with a number of independent political analysts and specialists to solicit their perspectives on the state of political development in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as party technical assistance needs. They were joined by Country Director Shannon O'Connell for similar discussions with NDI's political party partners. During these meetings, NDI also introduced the idea of creating a database for each party based on the local elections results so that the parties could begin to develop strategy based on research and results.

At the end of his assessment, Mr. Murphy produced a memo outlining a number of suggestions for improving the content and operation of NDI's political party program. Based on this assessment, a six month plan was drawn up that outlines program activities in five main areas:

- Advanced Campaign Managers Training
- Candidate Training
- Youth Campaign Academies
- Women Trainings
- Trainings on specific themes, such as fundraising and working with the media, according to each party's request

This document has been introduced to the parties and will be turned into individually tailored program calendars for each party partner. These calendars will then be discussed with the party leadership in meetings in the next quarter. The Advanced Campaign Managers Training, which was the first priority for NDI's program partners, is currently scheduled to begin in early Fall. As part of his work with the program, Mr. Murphy also constructed materials to be used in these trainings.

Election Results Database

In partnership with NDI's West Bank and Gaza elections team, the political party team has been working on building and finalizing a database of results from the second round of local elections. Information included in the database was collected from the HCLE, local municipalities, district electoral commissions and political parties.

The research includes valid votes per candidate as well as valid votes per voting bloc or party list. This information will help parties and candidates determine exactly how many voters were needed to win a seat in each locality, and in addition to being highly valuable institutional information, will allow parties to draw parallels with similar districts for the upcoming local elections, as well as make projections regarding voter affinity and likely turnout for the legislative elections. As these are the first local elections to be conducted in Palestinian areas since 1976, parties do not have electoral information on file and this database is the only source of such information for several organizations.

Results from NDI's data collection have been generated into several formats for use by the parties and other observers. Current report formats include:

- Political Affiliations and Endorsements per Governorate. This report shows all lists/blocs and the faction, movement or party they were endorsed by in all districts, with the number of candidates running.
- Winners per District and Political Affiliation. This report shows the district, candidate name, total valid votes with a political affiliation and endorsement per governorate.
- Popular Votes v. Candidates and Seats. This report shows the total number of valid votes per district and for each political affiliation, with the number of candidates running and number of winners for each district.
- Winners: This report shows winners' names, political affiliation and number of votes received for each district and governorate.
- Candidates v. Winners per District and Political Affiliation. This report shows districts, endorsements and affiliations with the number of candidates who ran and the number of winners.

Arrival of New Political Party Representative

Program Officer Emily Harding, who will be assuming responsibility for NDI's political party programming for the next year, arrived at the end of June. Ms. Harding brings years of political campaign and grassroots organizing and training experience to the Institute, most recently serving as Minnesota State Director for Americans United to Protect Social Security. During the last week of June, NDI scheduled a number of meetings to both familiarize her with the political landscape as well as introduce her to the Institute's program partners.

Electoral Code of Conduct

In preparation for upcoming municipal and legislative elections, NDI introduced the concept of an electoral Code of Conduct for Palestinian political parties. The idea for this code first

originated during the January 2005 presidential elections, and was reinforced during the first and second rounds of the local elections, when the Institute identified a number of issues that political parties need to address to strengthen public confidence in the entire electoral process. These issues include: intimidation of electoral officials and party interference in the electoral process, abuse of provisions for illiterate voters; clashes over public space for campaign materials, aggressive campaigning in around polling stations; abuse of state resources and failure to disclose sources of campaign funding. Additionally, without a political party law and weak means for enforcement of sanctions for violations of the current election law, there are few existing regulations on the conduct of parties during an electoral campaign.

For a Code of Conduct to be successful in the West Bank and Gaza it must be seen as a local and organic initiative. In cooperation with Tamkeen, NDI has identified a lead NGO partner, the Arab Thought Forum (ATF), to work with on this project. The Institute plans to provide technical assistance to ATF, who will lead a facilitated negotiation process among the parties to draft the code. Rebecca Haessig, former NDI Resident Senior Program Officer in the West Bank and Gaza, returned to Jerusalem to launch the project. Ms. Haessig will remain in Jerusalem to work on this and other projects related to the political party program from June 21 to August 10.

IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Provide campaign managers and advisors with the skills and resources necessary to devise a strategic campaign plan, manage resources and build an effective campaign organization.

- In the second round of local elections, the Institute witnessed a number of program partners implementing better organized and more effective campaign operations, based on NDI's trainings and materials:
 - In several localities in Gaza, Fatah developed manuals for campaign managers and organizers based on NDI's materials. This manual was put on CD and distributed to local campaigns throughout the Gaza Strip and in some locations in the West Bank.
 - Also in Gaza, Fatah organized a local campaign headquarters in Rafah based on NDI's recommendations for campaign structures and organizations.
 - Campaign managers from the Palestinian People's Party (PPP) in the West Bank reported back to the Institute that they had put together the best-organized campaign effort the party had ever fielded as a result of NDI's trainings and materials.
 - Smaller parties were able to organize local coalitions for these elections, based on NDI's recommendations for creating and managing electoral partnerships.

Provide candidates for public office with the skills necessary to organize a comprehensive electoral effort and communicate more personally and effectively with voters;

- Fifty-four potential candidates for local and legislative elections participated in NDI's candidate training workshops. Of those, nine participants were women.

- The Popular Struggle Front (PSF) ran its first-ever democratic candidate selection process based on NDI's training and briefing materials. Candidates for the national list for the legislative council were selected in a national party congress in which all members in attendance had the right to vote. PSF leaders considered this development a success in terms of the party's organizational growth.
- Fatah in Rafah also ran a candidate primary processes in which rank and file members had their first opportunity ever to participate in the selection of the final slate of candidates, based in part on NDI's recommendations and materials. Interestingly, Fatah leadership reported that they did not personally know any of the individuals who ended up as candidates through this process. Most were sent to NDI for candidate training. Though the results in this locality are disputed, at least three of these candidates won seats.
- Two candidates from the smaller parties who stood in the local elections reported that the voter outreach techniques taught by NDI were the most effective method they had found to break through clan and family voting.

Provide party and campaign activists with training and practice that will maximize their contribution to the campaign and the electoral process; and,

- At least 50 percent of those who participated in NDI's campaign managers trainings went on to serve as campaign managers or local organizers for their respective parties in the second round of local elections.
- One hundred and forty party pollwatchers participated in NDI's election observation workshops. Their participation in the electoral process became increasingly important as the results in four localities were challenged.
- In the evaluation of the program, the majority of participants in NDI's trainings for campaign managers indicated that the workshops were good or excellent in all respects.

Provide women candidates with the opportunity to network and exchange experiences with their counterparts in the Levant region.

- Thirty-one women and four men – political, community and NGO leaders and activists – participated in NDI's forum on women's participation on Palestinian Democracy Day. In evaluations, all participants said that the workshop had provided them with concrete information that would help them either stand for election as candidates or assist a woman they knew in such an effort.
- Nine women participated in NDI's candidate trainings in April.
- Forty-eight women participated in NDI's party pollwatching workshops in April.

V. EVALUATION

Local elections and preparations for national elections are creating opportunities for NDI's political party program partners to put into practice what they are experiencing and absorbing through the program. The lessons and technical skills introduced through the program are having a greater impact on the parties because they are being put to use. With each round of elections, the parties further recognize the value of NDI's trainings and materials to them, and demand for activities continues to grow.

Additionally, NDI is now a primary development resource for the smaller political parties. Though the Institute's relationship with these parties has been strong for several years, they have recently found themselves largely cut off from the same levels of funding they have received for decades through the PLO. With revenue decreased but training and organizing needs at election year highs, the smaller parties have turned even more to the Institute to help prepare party activities for the competitive demands before them.

NDI's program partners are becoming more focused and realistic in their expectations from and preparations for the electoral process, though internal disputes within Fatah, particularly in the West Bank, make it a challenging partner to work with at times. Nonetheless, the Institute continues to work with leadership on a number of different levels within the organization to insure that the program is able to reach both current and future decision-makers.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

- Next quarter, NDI will finalize and implement its newly developed tailored training plan for parties. At the request of program partners, this will likely begin with Advanced Campaign Managers Training in early Fall to further prepare party strategists and organizers to plan for the complications of the new mixed electoral system for the legislative elections.
- At the request of the smaller parties, NDI is considering organizing a conference on coalition building to assist all of the democratic political organizations preparing for legislative elections in their efforts to pool resources and possibly organize a single, alternative group of parties to challenge the main players, Fatah and Hamas.
- The Institute will organize individual consultations to walk each of its program partners through the database on the results of the second round of local elections and discuss lessons learned and strategies for upcoming elections.
- NDI will begin working with the Arab Thought Forum to identify to begin developing a Code of Conduct for upcoming municipal and legislative elections.
- Michael Murphy, who will be the interim Director of the West Bank and Gaza office while Director Shannon O'Connell is on maternity leave, will arrive at the beginning of July.