



**International
Republican Institute**

Suite 700
1225 Eye St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 408-9450
(202) 408-9462 FAX
Web site: www.iri.org

**CEPPS/IRI Women's Regional Campaign Schools
Quarterly Report: January 1, 2005 – March 31, 2005
Agreement Number DGC-A-00-01-00004-00**

Project Dates:

**Total Budget: \$350,000 Quarterly Expenses to Date: \$222,518
Project #7087**

I. SUMMARY

The Women's Regional Campaign Schools form an integral part of *Partners in Participation*, a collaborative effort between NGO/civil society communities in the Middle East and North Africa, the International Republican Institute (IRI), and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI). The objective of the *Partners in Participation* program is to increase the conceptual and technical capacity of women in the Arab world, improving their participation in civic and political affairs. *Partners in Participation* is sponsored by the U.S. Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) of the U.S. State Department.

To date, *Partners in Participation* has embodied a series of training conferences held in the Middle East and North Africa. The first conference was held in Doha, Qatar, from February 14-18, 2004; the second was held in Tunis, Tunisia, from July 19-22, 2004; and the third was held by NDI in Amman, Jordan, from March 28 - April 1, 2005. Each conference invites women who have demonstrated leadership in their respective fields to complete interactive training on campaign communications and leadership skills.

As part of the proposed follow-on activities from the training conferences, during this quarter IRI focused on continuing the development of an interactive website in order to maintain contact with conference participants, provide resources, and facilitate ongoing networking between women leaders throughout the region.

II. BACKGROUND

Across the region, women in the Middle East and North Africa are being granted new opportunities to seek and attain public office in elected institutions, thus allowing women to gain a meaningful voice in political society through peaceful, democratic means. Jordan and Morocco have both adopted quotas to encourage greater representation of women in the Parliament, and over the past several years, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman have granted women the right to vote and stand in elections. For recent municipal elections in the West Bank, a women's quota was passed allocating two seats for women (where women are running) on each council, which resulted in 52 newly-elected women representatives in local councils. Yet despite these victories, many women continue to face formidable obstacles in breaking traditional barriers that discourage or prevent their political participation.

The limited success that women have in gaining seats in local and national elected bodies, despite the legal right to vote and stand in elections, confirms that considerable work must be done to increase women's participation. This lack of success is due to a number of factors, including: an absence of qualified women candidates who have the skills and training to become viable candidates, the lack of interest on the part of women to enter the political fray, the presence of social barriers which prevent both men and women from supporting women in elected positions, and the pervasiveness of traditional beliefs that women should not enter politics, defined as men's domain.

Confronting these challenges is necessary for women's empowerment – not only for the benefit of individual women, but also to advance the case of political reform across all sectors in the Arab world. Women in the Middle East must gain practical skills in electoral and advocacy campaigns, political participation, general leadership, and good governance if they are to make serious political gains. This is best achieved through networking, skills-building, on-the-job training, and sharing experiences with other women who are in similar positions around the world. Acquiring these skills will help women to affect tangible, sustainable change in the region. While women have already participated in some elections, they remain overall novices in political development; it is essential for interested activists and potential future candidates to have the opportunity to refine and strengthen their capacity to compete and to lead.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

As part of the proposed follow-on activities from the training conferences, during this quarter IRI focused on continuing the development of an interactive website (in English, Arabic, and French) in order to maintain contact with conference participants, provide additional resources, and facilitate ongoing networking between women leaders throughout the region.

The website includes two primary sections: one section is public and provides detailed information about the objective of *Partners in Participation*, trainers and financial sponsorship, training methodology/agenda, media coverage, and other topics. The other section is private, with restricted access to members who register, and provides access to a web-based message board, a searchable database of all members, profiles and biographical information about members, and training materials. Following the website's official launch in the upcoming quarter, all conference participants will receive an invitation (via e-mail and print mail) to join

the network. Members will be able to search for other activists with a particular expertise or in a specific geographic location, and will then be able to communicate with them directly. To the extent possible, the website will be functional in English, Arabic, and French.

IRI has worked in coordination with NDI on developing the website, and will include training resources and participant profiles from the recent training in Amman, Jordan, hosted by NDI as well as all other activities related to *Partners in Participation*.

A vendor who will provide Arabic language content and site management was identified during the quarter. IRI plans to launch the full version of the site early in the next quarter.

IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Objectives:

1. To provide potential candidates and campaign team members from the Middle East and North Africa with the skills necessary to conduct effective electoral campaigns at the national, regional, or local level.
 - The third training conference under *Partners in Participation* auspices, which targeted women leaders from Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and the West Bank and Gaza, was organized by the National Democratic Institute and held in Amman, Jordan, from March 28 – April 1, 2005.
2. To expose political activists, potential candidates, and journalists to opportunities for exchange and coalition building to allow them to be effective advocates for political change.
 - Through the creation of the website the participants will be linked to each other and to electronic information. This website will establish a tool to help them be effective advocates for political change in their respective countries.

V. EVALUATION

The PIP website is in the final development stage and has not yet been released to the public. The official launch is scheduled for the upcoming quarter, and once it is advertised among previous conference participants and through other electronic networks of women activists, IRI anticipates that the *Partners in Participation* website will become a useful resource for communication and resource-sharing.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

IRI has proposed that the fourth training event be held in the Gulf region and would invite participants that demonstrated outstanding leadership from the previous three events. The goal would be to create an advisory body that could effectively institutionalize *Partners in Participation* as a permanent organization – created and staffed by women from the region – to serve as an ongoing resource for training and support for women leaders.

The interactive website available in Arabic, English, and French will be launched during the coming quarter. The launch of the site will provide an opportunity for IRI and NDI to reconnect with participants from all three schools and begin to develop participant buy-in for institutionalizing *Partners in Participation* in the region.

In order to gain a better understanding of future participant needs and how participants ultimately view PIP as being able to best support their endeavors, IRI, in cooperation with NDI, will circulate a survey in the coming quarter that queries participants about the PIP undertaking along with questions regarding challenges they currently face as women leaders and questions on how to best support women's participation in the Arab world.

IRI is currently planning two PIP follow-on training activities for the coming quarter. The first will involve Moroccan participants and other women political party activists and is scheduled to take place in Morocco in May. The second will be a targeted follow-on event for select participants from Algerian and Tunisian associations and will take place in early summer.