



CEPPS/NDI Quarterly Report: January 1 – March 31, 2005

**MOROCCO: PARTY STRENGTHENING AND PARLIAMENTARY REFORM
(04860/1)**

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I. SUMMARY

Morocco represents one of the most promising opportunities for democratic development in the Middle East and North Africa. The country's parliamentary elections in September 2002 and municipal elections in September 2003 were broadly considered to be well administered, and the election of 35 women to Morocco's Parliament elevated the country from last on the African continent to among the first in terms of women's political participation. With a monarch who has made progressive reform efforts in the areas of women's rights and consolidation of political parties, along with a thriving network of non-governmental organizations, Morocco has considerable potential for further development in the coming years.

Nevertheless, after a long history of corrupt government, citizens have grown disinterested with the political process and remain largely unfamiliar with how their political system works. The slow pace of socioeconomic development has also bred cynicism towards elected officials for not making enough progress in the critical areas of job creation and anti-corruption policy. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is dedicated to working to improve this situation, engaging with the parliamentary executive, individual members of parliament (MPs), parliamentary caucus chairs, and political parties to help facilitate the creation of truly functional democratic institutions.

Under its parliamentary program, NDI carried out three major activities this quarter to address parliamentary needs. First, NDI organized a colloquium on caucus and party mergers featuring two international experts and attended by fifty party and caucus leaders, as well as members of the television and print media. Next, the parliamentary team partnered with UNESCO to put on a four-day training for parliamentary journalists. The event featured journalism experts and presentations by MPs. Finally, the team began working on a new "Mobile Parliament" program, which will bring MPs to their constituencies to take part in public events with the aim of closing the communication gap between parliamentarians and the people they represent. NDI is currently organizing a pilot event for the mobile parliament program with local NGOs in the region of Azrou.

MOROCCO'S PRINCIPAL POLITICAL PARTIES

- ADL: Alliance of Liberties
- FFD: Front of Democratic Forces
- MNP: National Popular Movement
- MP: Popular Movement
- PI (Istiqlal): Independence Party
- PJD: Party of Justice and Development
- PND: Democratic National Party
- PSD: Democratic Socialist Party
- PPS: Party of Progress and Socialism
- RNI: Rally of National Independents
- UC: Constitutional Union
- UD: Democratic Union
- USFP: Union of Socialist Popular Forces

Through its political party program, NDI continued its series of focus groups on political party constituency outreach in each region of Morocco, conducting research this quarter in Oujda. A debriefing and constituency outreach consultation was held with political party representatives after each focus group. The political party team also launched the second program in a lecture series on issues pertinent to Moroccan political parties. A workshop was held on strategic planning for party representatives, and a two-day training on communications targeted party

journalists. The team also circulated the quarterly issue of its newsletter, targeting party headquarters and branch offices nationwide.

II. BACKGROUND

In order to fulfill the King's request for a "homogenous majority" and a "constructive opposition" in parliament, political parties made efforts in establishing alliances. After the King's request to strengthen the multiparty system, the more than thirty-two political parties in Morocco made an initial effort to secure more tools, strategies and technical information needed to merge along similar political tendencies and platforms. After long years of balkanization, alignments built around personalities and exertion of political power based on proximity to the monarchy, party leaders and parliamentarians find a formidable two-fold challenge in the new political context. On the one hand, their parties must develop internal party democracy, and on the other they must turn their parties' priorities towards constituents' concerns.

Despite the parties' initial enthusiasm to fulfill the King's request, the events of this quarter revealed that parties have very little incentive to merge in the face of their formidable challenges. On the legislative level, the parliament has representatives from twenty-six parties split into seven caucuses, making coalition-building for governance and legislation extremely difficult. Moreover, a significant number of MP's do not have previous legislative experience and some are illiterate. While the political party law has potential to create incentives for coalitions and mergers and contribute to the restructuring of party financing and politics at the local level, the close of the Parliamentary session in the fall saw little activity and was characterized by "flagrant" absenteeism that prevented several important pieces of legislation, including the political party law, from being voted on. The continued lack of decisive action on the bill was a disappointment to political observers who saw it as an opportunity to limit the number of parties. Critics of the bill consisted of some smaller parties, who would likely need to reach a higher electoral threshold to secure a seat in Parliament. Furthermore, the power given to the Interior Minister to dissolve parties for acting illegally worried many who believed this power would be abused to punish opposition parties. Although a number of parties, particularly those that are left-leaning, have been holding meetings to discuss common issues and areas of overlap in their platforms beyond the parliamentary level, there is little indication that real mergers or coalitions

are taking root. In meetings to discuss the next phase of NDI programming, these parties continue to plan separately. Some parties, notably the USFP, are cited in the newspapers as undergoing restructuring, but the results of this will not be seen until their Congress, currently rumored to be scheduled for June. They have recently constructed a very large headquarters complex, which is not yet open and will require a large staff. It is unclear how this is to be financed.

Because the political scene is slowly driving parties and caucuses to merge with each other, NDI has been requested to provide more technical assistance and hold an increasing number of activities related to party mergers and the development of alliances and coalitions. In this climate, NDI maintains two focal programs for supporting democratic development in Morocco: one directed at members of Parliament and the other at political parties. The objectives of the programs are the following:

RELATIVE PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS REPRESENTATION

- Union of Popular Forces (MP/MNP/UD) – 24%
- Istiqlal Party – 17%
- USFP – 15%
- PJD – 13%
- RNI – 12%
- UC/PND – 8%
- Socialist Alliance (PPS/PND/Al Ahd) – 7%
- Other non-caucus parties – 4%

Parliament Program

- To bridge the gap between members of Parliament (MPs), civil society leaders and constituents; and
- To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of MPs and party caucuses.

Political Party Program

- To help political parties to develop a better understanding of citizen perceptions and to overcome the gap dividing parties from citizens;
- To build the capacity of women and youth to participate fully in political parties; and
- To improve political party members' access to skills and resources and communication within and between their parties.

NDI's Parliamentary Program

III. ACTIVITIES

Colloquium on Caucus and Party Mergers

The parliamentary and political party programs held a joint activity on February 14 to support caucus and party merger efforts. NDI also arranged for a three-day series of private consultations on the subject with visiting international experts. The seminar was held in Rabat at the Farah Hotel and consultations took place in the NDI office and at party headquarters.

Two international experts came to Morocco for the activity. David Rose is deputy leader of the Progressive Unionist Party of Northern Ireland, and has had extensive experience relevant to joint party activities, including an unsuccessful merger attempt. Senator Pierre Claude Nolin of Canada experienced a successful merger between his and another conservative Canadian party on the caucus and party-wide levels. They ran as a merged party under a new banner during the subsequent election cycle and succeeded in raising their representation in parliament so significantly that they became the majority government. The experts underlined the amount of work involved at all levels of the party and the importance of involving all members in final decisions to ensure that a merger is successful. Only an extensive consultation process held with all parties involved in the merger effort can accomplish this. After sharing their experiences in presentations given during the event, the experts took part in the individual party consultations that took place following the seminar. Approximately 50 senior political party representatives attended, including ten MPs and five women. Fifteen media representatives, including television and print journalists, also attended.

A key outcome of the seminar was the recognition that reform of Morocco's electoral laws will be crucial in influencing the success of party mergers. As a result, new attention is being given to this area.

Training of Parliamentary Journalists

During this reporting period, the parliamentary team partnered with UNESCO to train journalists on parliamentary press coverage. The training was held in Rabat in association with the Maghreb Arab Press Agency (MAP), and was attended by approximately ten MAP journalists. NDI coordinated with the parliament and arranged for MPs to speak on a panel at the event. The panel featured three presenters: 1) Adil El Kholti, head of the communication division of the Chamber of Counsellors, who spoke generally about managing relations between parliamentarians and the press; 2) Driss Lachgar, President of the socialist caucus, who gave some basic information about the different roles of deputies and the functions of the different structures within Parliament; and 3) Milouda Hazeb, MP from the UC/PND coalition, who gave her impressions of the media from the point-of-view of a parliamentarian. NDI's Morocco Resident Director, Gérard Latulippe, also discussed his experiences with the parliamentary press while serving as a member of the Canadian government. He also talked about NDI's role in efforts to improve media relations with the Moroccan Parliament.

Laying the Groundwork for the “Mobile Parliament” Program

NDI’s parliamentary program has been working hard with civil society groups and MPs to set up a “Mobile Parliament” program. Originally developed by NDI in Macedonia, the Mobile Parliament program seeks to bring MPs to their districts to do on-site events that will strengthen their connection with constituents. Although the full program is still waiting to be approved by the bureau of the parliament, NDI has been hard at work organizing a pilot event, currently scheduled for April 10 in Azrou. In preparation, NDI met several times with one of the representatives from the district, Mustapha Yagoubi, Socialiste Alliance MP and Vice President of the Parliament. The event will be aimed at local NGOs and will seek to explain to them the role of their MP and gather their ideas for enhancing communication between citizens and representatives.

IV. RESULTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Objective 1: Bridge the gap between members of parliament (MPs), civil society leaders and constituents.

Results:

- Last quarter, NDI trained MPs in ways to feel more confident on camera, to speak clearly and credibly on television, and formulate talking points for public and televised speeches. This quarter, NDI complemented the effort by training MAP journalists on how to cover parliamentary events, approach parliamentarians and better understand the legislative institution—all part of ensuring accurate and comprehensive reporting. The training has resulted in the creation of a team of MAP journalists specialized in covering the parliament, along with a group of parliamentarians who feel better prepared to receive the press.
- During this quarter, NDI presented the executive bureau with a report on Moroccans perceptions of the Parliament, based on a series of focus groups held in 2004. Needless to say, the report highlighted citizens’ disenchantment with their representatives, including the ineffective communication from parliamentarians. As a result, members of the bureau have expressed their desire to pursue outreach activities to help bridge the gap in understanding about the parliament.

Objective 2: Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of MPs and party caucuses.

Results:

- The forum on party/caucus mergers made the parties aware that a merger involves much more than collaboration between caucuses and parliamentarians. The participants realized that for the success of a merger or true alliance, they will need both a new political party law and modifications to the existing electoral law. As a result of this forum, MPs approached NDI to request an activity on the electoral law, which is now slated for the end of April.

- The meetings and activities that NDI has held for party caucuses on the subject of merging have provided many opportunities for the political bureaus of different parties to meet. This has resulted in a greater trust and partnership among parties that may eventually merge, evidenced by the increasing number of jointly held meetings at the executive levels, especially among parties in the Socialist Alliance and those in the Berber movement.

V. EVALUATION

After eight years of partnership with Moroccan decision makers, NDI finds itself uniquely situated in a relationship of trust with the parliamentary institution, parliamentary caucuses, individual MPs and the leadership of political parties. Increasingly, MPs and party leaders seek out NDI to propose and initiate programming. NDI programs have therefore become primarily demand driven, reflecting responsiveness to local needs and a growing maturity among political actors as they clarify their needs.

An on-going series of pilot projects is one good example of a demand-driven programming. A pilot project in 2004 in the region of Goulimine provided MPs an opportunity to see if they could address the concerns of the small industry of their region. Now, MP Oudour has requested NDI's support in a pilot project that will test the next level of parliamentarian's connection to their constituents. In the region of Tata, Oudour would like to have a roundtable on local economic development with representatives of the handicraft, agriculture, and tourism sectors, and not only define and discuss their needs, but stay in contact with them over the long-term, mobilize contacts from the capital to help them and, ultimately, follow through on the development of their small businesses. Through the pilot projects, NDI creates a test of will for the parliamentarians and provides them with an opportunity to answer the question, "How far can you go?" The next phase of NDI programming in the Parliament is being developed largely in accordance with requests from parliamentary staff, caucuses and the executive bureau.

Overall, the parliamentary program has shifted its strategic approach not only to become demand driven, but also to be available to respond to the political trends and reforms of the moment, as seen with the political party law activity, merger programming and upcoming electoral law event. The past quarter has seen NDI become a support to MPs who take advantage of politically significant moments, and this availability to address breaking current events is taking root by sparking integrated programming where key issues intersect.

Another major change of late is that NDI is no longer the only actor working with the Parliament. The past year has seen the installment of a UNDP and an ARD/SUNY team, and NDI now works in coordination with the other actors to create complementary programs and avoid duplicating efforts. Even memorandums of understanding are first developed in coordination with UNDP and ARD before they are submitted to the executive bureau of the Parliament for approval. This cooperation has distinguished NDI's unique contribution to parliamentary development by demand-driven programming in close proximity with the parliamentarians, and the flexibility to answer their needs as they arise.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

During the next quarter, NDI will organize the following activities:

- Mobile Parliament roundtable pilot project in Azrou (April)
- Electoral law forum and working session in Rabat (April)
- Internship program between law students and parliamentary caucuses in Rabat (April)
- Forum on the media and human rights in Rabat (May)
- Training elected officials in the Casablanca region (May)
- Activity with Nouzha Skalli, PPS MP, on legislation for a government *Observatoire* (May)
- Consultations with parliamentary staff, executive bureau and caucuses on next phase of parliamentary programming (May)
- Constituency outreach and follow-up strategy pilot project in Tata (June)
- Baseline study on Parliament and caucuses (July)

NDI's Political Party Program

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Focus Groups on Constituency Outreach Between Elections

On February 19-20, NDI conducted four focus groups in Oujda, a town in northeast Morocco on the Algerian border. Oujda was the last city in a study encompassing five regions. The target groups for the focus groups were men and women from middle, lower-middle and lower classes living in both urban and rural areas. Oujda focus group results corroborated the main themes from other regions in that people received no communication from political parties outside the election period, and people wanted to see results, not just promises, especially in the areas of unemployment, corruption and infrastructure development. As in the case of other regions, the issues of water, roads and electricity are of primary concern to rural residents. The Oujda region was unique in that participants felt isolated from the rest of Morocco and had not understood many of the political and democratic openings of the past six years. Older rural women were hesitant to discuss politics based on fears they had of political detention, concerns that date back to the reign of previous king, Hassan II. Oujda participants also placed much greater importance on the political issue of the contested Western Sahara than their counterparts from other parts of the country.

On February 21, a four-hour follow-up workshop was held to debrief with nineteen party observers who attended the focus groups. The objectives of the debriefing were both to synthesize the main themes of the four focus groups and discuss the party representatives' reactions to these. Most observers agreed that the participants' perceptions were correct and that the parties and their elected representatives could do much more. During these debriefing sessions, NDI distributed a draft copy of its *Guide to Constituency Outreach Between Elections* for discussion and feedback from the representatives.

The political party representatives observing the focus groups were impressed by the research technique and the pertinent content of the participant discussions. Not a single party representative had been exposed to the concept of focus group research before having observed the NDI sessions. After the experience, most commented that focus groups would be a very useful tool for the current political transformation in Morocco. Additionally, party representatives were grateful for NDI's ongoing efforts to widen its activities outside of the Rabat-Casablanca central corridor.

A final report is being prepared to synthesize the results of all the constituency outreach focus groups. The report will be ready in April, and the findings will be compiled with the final edition of outreach guide.

Workshop on "Tools for Organization and Development"

On February 22-25, NDI trained political party trainers on "Tools For Organization and Development" in Oujda. The 25 workshop participants included fifteen men and ten women representing seven different parties: the PSD, UC, FFD, PI, USFP, PPS and PND. The program

consisted of a two-day training in Arabic, offered twice, both under the direction of Audrey McLaughlin, Director of NDI's political party programs, and Hassan Ezzaim, NDI's Political Party Program Officer.

NDI debriefed the participants on the results of the focus groups on constituency outreach conducted in the region. A guided discussion followed connecting the voices and comments of the focus group participants to outreach work at the party level. The workshop included the why, how, where and when of political outreach tools such as surveys and guided discussions with literate and illiterate people. Participants did exercises and role plays to learn and demonstrate the principles behind outreach tools. During one activity, they were divided into fictional political parties and asked to develop communication and outreach strategies for their platforms that could be presented by an elected spokesperson. The training also involved a role play using survey techniques, simulating surveying scenarios in public spaces as well as in rural and urban contexts.

To support their efforts in transmitting the techniques and tools of development within their parties, NDI distributed and reviewed the *Guide to Effective Training*.

Strategic Planning Seminar

On March 12, NDI held a one-day seminar in Rabat on strategic planning for twenty party representatives. They included six women and 14 men from women and youth wings of 10 different parties: the ADL, Al Ahd, FFD, PSD, PPS, UC, MP, UD, MNP and PND.

Gerard Latulippe, NDI's Resident Director in Morocco, acted as principle trainer with assistance from Benoit Rutten of the Walloon Belgium Delegation in Rabat. Latulippe presented the basic principles of strategic planning, including systematic approaches to planning political agendas, and interactive exercises to practice the principles. Rutten gave examples from the Belgian context, where his party experienced reform at all levels after a change of party presidents. Rutten also gave an overview of Belgian political parties including topics such as their management, membership, financing, information flow, press and structure. The method of planning and strategizing was new to most participants, many of whom stated that it was relevant, useful and applicable.

Women's Committee

Following an NDI lecture series on quotas for women in elected positions and political party lists held last November, the Institute assisted a group of Moroccan women politicians in forming a committee on this issue. On January 25, NDI invited interested women back to continue the discussion and plan for their proposed committee. MPs and representatives of women's sections of parties included members from the FFD, PI, PPS, UC, RNI, ADL, USFP, MP and PSD. Interestingly, the discussion remained on general and non-partisan ground, and all participants were united in their discontent with parties' marginalization of women. The majority of the group felt that the electoral law was the most important instrument to help change the position of women in politics. At the same time, participants had very different ideas on how best to collaborate and confront the issue. As a follow up, this group has been invited to the seminar on electoral law reform to be held in late April.

NDI Lecture Series on the Palestinian Elections

On February 3, NDI held the second in a series of lectures on topics of current interest for representatives from political parties. The program featured special guest Abdelaziz Nouyadi along with NDI's Audrey McLaughlin, both members of the international observation delegation during the Palestinian elections. The discussion session included the presenter's impressions of the changing political scene in Palestine in the occupation situation in the aftermath of President Arafat's death, and specifics on the overall success of the election process itself. The mission delegates also had an opportunity to meet with one of the presidential candidates. Despite all of the obstacles faced by the Palestinians, they had a 70 percent voter turnout on election day. Positive elements of the elections included the absence of violence and the strong participation of women. Among the negative factors were that Hamas party did not vote and the poll-closing time was arbitrarily extended in some places on election day. Participants attending the lecture included six journalists from political party newspapers and three women members of political parties.

Communication Workshop

On January 12-13, NDI held a workshop for political party newspaper journalists in Rabat at the Farah Hotel. The program was led by NDI's resident Knight Fellow Michelle Betz, a professor of audiovisual journalism from the University of Florida. Twenty journalists from twelve papers attended the event, including Al Alam (PI), Al Ittihad Al Ichtiraki (USFP), Al Harraka (MP), Rissalat Al Oumma (UC), Assiyassa Al Jadida (PSD), Bayane Al Yawm and Al Bayane (PPS), Al Mouna'ataf (FFD), Al Maa'raka (MNP), Annidal Addimokrati, (PND), Attajdid (PJD sympathizer) and Sawt Al Hak (independent paper). The focus of the workshop was on the differences between politically based and independent media and on journalism ethics for both. Betz and the participants also conducted interactive exercises to define journalism and its role in society. Finally, the participants worked together to define what the challenges facing journalists in Morocco are and outline ways to overcome these. Problems identified included access to sources of information, work conditions, ethically "grey areas," low salaries, lack of motivation and lack of on-going training.

"La Passerelle Newsletter"

NDI developed a quarterly newsletter for political parties called *La Passerelle* (meaning "The Footbridge"). The newsletter seeks to raise awareness about democratization issues for Moroccan political parties and serves as a line of communication among various party headquarters, branch offices and parliamentarians.

The third issue of the newsletter was published and distributed during this reporting period. This latest edition includes a summary of all the trainings, seminars, workshops and resource materials that NDI has offered Moroccan political parties over the last quarter. The newsletter has also developed a "letter to the editor" section, asking an open-ended question and printing the responses of readers to help stimulate communication, debate and discussion on important current political events. The previous issue's discussion was on the topic of women's quotas within the executive boards of political parties. The most recent edition includes a reader

discussion on Morocco's electoral law. More than two hundred and fifty copies were distributed in Arabic to the Parliament and political party headquarters, as well as to party branch offices in Fez, Agadir, Errachidia, Laraache, Marrakech and Meknes. Fifty copies in English were circulated among embassies, NGOs, development agencies and NDI sister offices in other regions.

IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Objective One: Help political parties to develop a better understanding of citizen perceptions and overcome the gap dividing parties from citizens.

Results:

- More representatives of political parties have been exposed to the process of focus groups, which both promotes the Focus Group Centre and what they can do but also through the follow-up presentations and workshops, parties can be given tools which they can use to survey their own members or segments of the public.
- The focus group presentation series has also been used to field test the *Guide to Constituency Outreach Between Elections*, resulting in a more relevant document for the use of parties.

Objective Two: Build the capacity of women and youth to participate fully in political parties.

Results:

- After a series of training of trainers workshops for women and youth section leadership, participants from the ADL, PSD and PND have gone on to conduct at least ten of their own sessions. Using the *Guide to Effective Training* and with technical support from NDI staff, participants in various cities have trained youth and women's section members of their parties on the subjects of public speaking and conflict resolution.
- The youth organizations for the Istiqlal and PPS political parties have approached NDI to request assistance in preparing for their trainings and conferences.
- As a result of joint programming between the parliamentary and party programs, the women's committee will be able to participate in a seminar on electoral law addressing one of their major issues and providing a basis for further work with the women's sections.
- Following the November 2004 NDI lecture series on "Quotas for Women in Political Parties," presented by guest speaker Marlene Haas, participating women politicians who were particularly interested in focusing on women in party leadership positions have followed up with NDI and are continuing to meet and develop action plans.

Objective Three: Improve political party members' access to skills and resources.

Results:

- Many political parties have newspapers or other periodicals. Given that they currently have low or waning circulation, there is some question as to how many people actually read the papers since they are generally only published in classical Arabic or French. The communication workshop for journalists raised a number of points on these issues that have been echoed in constituency outreach meetings with parties. This has revealed that key challenges facing democratic development in Morocco are increasingly reinforced, addressed and cross referenced in our programs.
- The NDI newsletter provides information for parties and there is a growing list of recipients as all participants in activities are included on the mailing list. Through this, we have been able to reach a much wider audience that goes beyond Rabat.
- During this period, Al Ahd, a party in the Socialist Alliance coalition, approached NDI asking to be included in our programs. Al Ahd was formed in March 2002 and holds 437 elected communal seats, thirty-seven commune presidencies and five seats in the Chamber of Representatives.

V. EVALUATION

What has become clear is that there is a great deal of support for our programs, especially along the wider membership of parties; and that youth and women are very eager for any skills and resources that will assist them. While this is the case in Rabat, it is even more important outside Rabat, where members tend to receive much less attention from their parties.

Certainly some parties are more interested in participating in our programs than others, but recently, even parties that have been somewhat less responsive and have had lower representation during trainings, such as Istiqlal, are now approaching NDI and asking staff to participate in and contribute to their activities.

Through our collective observations and based on the development of the program, three factors will be addressed in future activities in order to have an even more substantial impact on party development. They are: 1) aim to involve the senior level members of political parties in activities with the elected members in order to address the wide gap between the two groups; 2) increase follow-up after all trainings, workshops and seminars to solidify learning and ensure application of skills developed, and, finally; 3) build enough flexibility into the programming to allow for responding to parties' requests as current issues arise.

In terms of the current programs, the evaluations by participants have been very positive and the most common response is "*do more, more often.*" It is therefore essential to build into the program design follow-up training as both an educative and evaluative tool. It has been our experience, as well, that the most effective training is done in Arabic and not in French.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

During the next quarter, NDI will organize the following activities:

- National training academy in Ifrane for 40 women and youth participants on constituency outreach, conflict resolution, strategic planning and leadership (April)
- Launch the political party web site, “Morocco Democracy Online” (May)
- Consultations with participating political parties to assess training needs leading to the 2007 election to better design the next phase of programming (May/June)
- Fourth edition of the quarterly newsletter (June)
- Follow-up training with academy participants (July)
- Baseline study of all participating political parties (July)