



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

**REGIONAL: Middle East Women’s Campaign Training (04853-4)
USAID Cooperative Agreement No. DGC-A-00-01-00004-00**

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I. SUMMARY

The inclusion of women is essential to the promotion of democratic change in the Middle East and North Africa. Such inclusion not only leads to increased participation in the electoral process and therefore greater “power at the polls” but also ensures the dispersion of power that is an intrinsic element of a democratic system. Elections in most of the region are spread out over the 2004-2007 period, providing the opportunity to support prospective women candidates and activists in playing a more visible role in society. This is particularly true in Egypt, Lebanon, and the West Bank and Gaza Strip where parliamentary elections provide an ideal laboratory to refine the methods for increasing women’s political participation so they may be applied on a regional scale.

Despite the prevalence of women’s organizations and the professional accomplishments of women, Lebanese women rarely run for or win local or national office and are conspicuously absent from the country’s government and political processes. Although Lebanese women generally enjoy a high level of education, they are underrepresented in the government, accounting for only 2.3 percent of all local elected officials. Following the 2005 parliamentary elections, women’s representation doubled from three to six, although each of the incumbent and newly elected women parliamentarians are connected to a deceased or imprisoned male political actor. While traditional attitudes about the role of women and a legacy of male dominance in Lebanon’s political system have left women underrepresented in the country’s political institutions, increasing women’s political empowerment could change traditional perceptions of women and advance their political participation.

With the overall goal of increasing the ability of Arab women to play an active role in politics and galvanize support for women’s involvement in the political decision-making process, the National Democratic Institute’s (NDI) program seeks to:

- provide potential women candidates and campaign activists from the Middle East and North Africa with exposure to the skills necessary to wage professional and credible campaigns at the national, regional, or local level;

- expose political activists and potential candidates to models of good governance and coalition building to allow them to be effective advocates for democratic change; and,
- build support for women's political empowerment and their increased participation in public life.

During this reporting period, NDI conducted the following activities:

- Provided technical assistance to women candidates running for elected office in Lebanon; and
- Assisted the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) to conduct a national media campaign to promote women's participation through TV and radio spots, posters, and brochures.

Encouraged by the Lebanon women's campaign schools and *Win With Women* Levant Regional Women's Campaign School, Lebanese participants decided to work together as a coalition known as *Lebanese for Change* to promote each others' candidacies. NDI and the Lebanese Conflict Resolution Network (LCRN) helped the coalition identify their goals and develop strategies to compete in the 2005 legislative elections.

II. BACKGROUND

From 2005 to 2007, elections in many countries in the Middle East and North Africa will present a unique opportunity for those female activists interested in gaining a meaningful voice in political society through peaceful, democratic means to make themselves heard through the ballot box. With the exception of the United Arab Emirates, each country in the region has recently held or will soon hold elections at the national, regional, or local level, and in most cases, women have or will have the opportunity to play a larger role in the elections than ever before. In Yemen, for example, 36 women were elected to local councils in 2001. Bahrain held its first parliamentary and municipal elections in 25 years in 2002, and for the first time, women were permitted to run as candidates. In September of that year, 35 women were elected to the Moroccan Parliament, and Jordan followed suit with the historic election of six women to their national legislature in 2003.

Traditional attitudes about the role of women and a legacy of male dominance in Lebanon's political system have left women underrepresented in the country's political institutions and have impeded their political participation. Advances in women's political participation were made in 2004, with a woman being appointed as a cabinet minister and in municipal elections held in May, women office holders increased from 1.6 percent to 2.3 percent. The 2005 legislative elections saw women's representation in parliament double from three to six, although each of the incumbent and newly elected women parliamentarians are connected to a deceased or imprisoned male political actor.

Building upon the momentum of recent elections in several countries in the region and recognizing that elections are fought not only on election day but also over the course of an entire electoral cycle, this program seeks to expose women political activists in the region to campaign and governance practices that have been successful around the world.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

During this reporting period, NDI:

- Provided technical assistance to women candidates running for elected office in Lebanon; and
- Assisted the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) to conduct a national media campaign to promote women's participation through TV and radio spots, posters, and brochures.

Technical Assistance for Women Candidates

Lebanese for Change

Encouraged by the Lebanon women's campaign schools and *Win With Women-Partners in Participation* Levant regional women's campaign school, Lebanese participants decided to work together to promote each others' candidacies for parliament. The women represented the political, confessional, partisan and geographic diversity of Lebanon. Their aims included securing places on their respective parties' candidate lists, as well as publicizing the importance of electing more women. In two meetings, a dozen women defined what brought them together as a coalition, finalized their founding principles, identified potential funders and agreed on a campaign name: *Lebanese for Change*.

To support *Lebanese for Change*, NDI arranged for the Lebanese Conflict Resolution Network (LCRN) to facilitate a day-long discussion among coalition members. Facilitators Armen Bailen and Ali Chahine attended the coalition's meetings to gain a better understanding of the women's needs and help them formulate meeting agendas. With the assistance of LCRN, the coalition decided that their primary goal would be to secure a member's position on a candidate list with the help and support of group members. *Lebanese for Change* issued a press release describing the coalition and stating their intent to support women candidates by conducting voter outreach, fundraising and recruiting volunteers and election observers.

Consultations with Women Candidates

NDI held consultations with women interested in running as candidates in legislative elections. In advance of elections, NDI provided strategic and technical assistance to women trying to gain spots on various lists, including Future Movement, Amal Movement and the list compiled by Michel Aoun. Four women mounted aggressive campaigns to publicize their candidacies and get supporters to contact

candidate list-makers. Although none of the women NDI worked with were able to get on candidate lists in this election cycle, several women campaigned within their own parties to provide support for party candidates and expressed their intention to continue efforts to mobilize women in the realm of politics in the future.

NDI followed-up with women who participated in the campaign schools to discuss ways to promote women's participation in the post-election period. One of the participants held a brainstorming session with NDI to develop a strategic plan for the creation of shadow women's parliament. The Institute assisted another participant, who attended all of the campaign schools and is active within the Phalange Party, to submit her resume to the Future Movement for a position in the cabinet.

Women's Participation Media Campaign

With NDI's assistance, the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) conducted a national media campaign to promote women's participation in the 2005 legislative elections. The "Use Your Voice" campaign featured five prominent Lebanese women appearing in television, radio and billboard advertisements urging women to become active in the political process. The campaign ran on television and radio for one week and was featured on 600 billboards throughout the election cycle. NDI coordinated the distribution of 25,000 "Use Your Voice" bumper stickers throughout the country.



A LADE "Use Your Voice" billboard featuring Al-Arabiyya Anchorwoman Giselle Khoury

IV. RESULTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Objective #1: *Provide potential women candidates and campaign activists from the Middle East and North Africa with exposure to the skills necessary to wage professional and credible campaigns at the national, regional, or local level*

- With the assistance of NDI and LCRN, *Lebanese for Change* were able to formulate a strategy to support women's candidacies in the 2005 parliamentary elections.
- Through technical assistance provided by NDI, several women mounted aggressive campaigns to gain spots on candidate lists or campaigned within their own parties to provide support for party candidates.

Objective #3: *Build support for women's political empowerment and their increased participation in public life*

- LADE's national women's participation media campaign, featuring five prominent Lebanese women figures, ran on television and radio for one week and was featured on 600 billboards throughout the election cycle.

V. EVALUATION

Despite providing technical assistance and support to women candidates, none of the women NDI worked with were able to procure spots on the major candidate lists in this heated election cycle. However, four women mounted aggressive campaigns to publicize their candidacies and solicit supporters to contact candidate list-makers. Additionally, several women campaigned within their own parties to provide support for party candidates and expressed their intention to continue efforts to mobilize women in the realm of politics in the future.

In the aftermath of legislative elections, NDI has decided to refocus its efforts to better promote women's participation by conducting a thorough assessment of what women need to secure places on electoral lists and run viable campaigns. The Institute is planning to convene recent women candidates and those who seriously considered running for parliament to determine political obstacles that women face and adopt action plans for addressing them.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

NDI is beginning preparations for the fourth and final *Win With Women-Partners in Participation* regional women's campaign school which is scheduled to take place in Kuwait this September. The Institute is in the process of developing a program outline and identifying potential participants. NDI Senior Resident Representative Kelley Jones will be responsible for managing the school and DC-based staff will be travelling to Kuwait to coordinate logistics in the coming weeks.