



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

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

**Project dates: August 1, 2004 and October 31, 2005
Total budget: \$478,932.00 Expenses to date: \$362,550.64**

I. SUMMARY

The local and national elections scheduled for 2005 provide significant opportunities for the National Democratic Institute's (NDI) political party partners to initiate dialogue with citizens, conduct research on public opinion, and establish a strong field organization. The presidential election was held January 9, 2005. The first round of local elections was conducted in the West Bank on December 23, 2004 and in the Gaza Strip on January 27, 2005. The next round of local elections is scheduled in the West Bank and Gaza for May 5, 2005. Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections are currently scheduled to occur on July 17, 2005. The elections have heightened the parties' motivation to learn from and act on the advice the Institute regularly provides through its consultations and workshops.

The development of Palestinian political parties, which includes the active participation of women activists, is a long-term endeavor best viewed on a continuum, with each election presenting a new opportunity for improvement and more meaningful party participation. By providing campaign training for candidates, campaign managers and grassroots activists NDI seeks to: (1) 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; (2) Provide candidates for public office with the skills necessary to organize a comprehensive electoral effort and communicate more personally and effectively with voters; (3) Provide party and campaign activists with training and practice that will maximize their contribution to the campaign and the electoral process; and (4) Provide women candidates with the opportunity to network and exchange experiences with their counterparts in the Levant region.

This quarter, NDI conducted a series of three-day trainings for campaign managers from Fateh and the Palestinian Democratic Coalition (PDC). The Institute also hosted discussion forums concerning reforming and expanding the PDC as the members of the Coalition are contemplating running a joint slate of candidates in the local and parliamentary elections. In addition, ten Palestinian participants were recruited to participate in the Institute's campaign school for women candidates in Amman, held from March 28 to April 1.

II. BACKGROUND

Presidential, parliamentary and local elections are being conducted throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 2005. Mahmoud Abbas was elected president of the Palestinian Authority (PA) on January 9, 2005. The first round of local elections was conducted in the West Bank on December 23, 2004 and in the Gaza Strip on January 27, 2005. Hamas, competing in a Palestinian electoral contest for the first time, made a strong showing in the first round of local elections. The next round of local elections is scheduled in the West Bank and Gaza for May 5, 2005. Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections are currently scheduled to occur on July 17, 2005.

Despite more than a year of debate on the likely form and content of a new election law, as of the end of March no such legislation has yet been passed in preparation for the legislative elections. Additionally, the July 17 date for these elections has been in question. The primary reason is conflict and confusion within Fateh. The movement is having a difficult time getting an agreed version of the bill out of their caucus room, let alone onto the floor of the legislative council for a second reading.

There are two major issues under debate and discussion by Fateh members: the electoral system that will be enacted and the timing of these elections. The electoral system is of primary concern to Fateh incumbents who are worried about losing their seats. There are proposals for a constituency system, as was used in 1996, a straight national proportional representation list system, or some combination of these two. The timing of the election is also connected with Fateh's prospects for electoral success. Senior members of the movement believe that they need more time to allow the peace process to deliver something tangible for the voters before they can hold a poll. Additionally, there is the belief that the sixth party conference, currently scheduled for early August, will take care of some internal issues and disputes, and allow the party to present a more united front to voters. There are proposals to delay the vote until October or November.

In the background in all aspects of this debate is Hamas. With very strong showings in recent local and university elections, as well as in research and polling, Hamas appears to be in a position to possibly overtake Fatah as the majority party in the PLC.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Campaign Training Schools

Trainings for campaign managers were conducted throughout March. The campaign schools were conducted by David Rose, Deputy Leader of the Progressive Unionist Party of Northern Ireland. Three rounds of three-day trainings were organized: one for Fatah and two for members of the PDC, including the Palestinian People's Party (PPP), which had declined to work with NDI in the past. The campaign training workshops comprised thirty participants, one trainer, one interpreter and an administrative assistant. Still reeling from its defeat in the January local elections and attempting to refocus its efforts before the May local and July legislative elections,

Fatah participated in the first campaign manager school in the first half of March. The training was designed for 30 people, but more than 55 participants showed up.

The parties all suffer from a lack of knowledge, discipline and strategic thinking when it comes to running an election campaign. All seem to believe that it is the voter's responsibility to reward the parties for thinking and saying the 'right things'. The result is that they ignore core issues such as: communicating with voters, responding to the voter's needs, basic organization or voter research and targeting. The workshops were designed to address obvious gaps in the parties' outlook. They came in three distinct sections:

1. **Voter research.** This focuses on the basic concept of understanding that different types of voters exist. NDI aims to help the parties understand that they need to identify who their supporters are and which voters could be persuaded to vote for them. NDI also seeks to impress upon the parties the need to respond to voters as opposed to expecting voters to respond to them.
2. **Message development.** This component focuses on developing a message that responds to the needs of the target voters.
3. **Campaign Management.** This part of the training is concerned with the practicalities of making a campaign happen. NDI aims to ensure the parties understand: a. the different jobs that exist within a campaign team; b. the need to find the right person for each job and, c. the need for structured planning.

Candidate Selection and Coalition Building

NDI's party partners are considering running a joint slate of candidates for subsequent rounds of municipal and parliamentary elections. They asked NDI to host discussions concerning reforming and expanding the moribund Palestinian Democratic Coalition. These discussion forums were planned for parties in Ramallah and Gaza City.

Two discussion forums were held in the second week of March in Gaza for the PDC: one on organizing coalitions and the other on candidate selection. The sessions started with a presentation on each of the topics, followed by a facilitated discussion. Each was well attended, with representatives from PSF, FISA, PPP, independents and NGOs. The debate on each topic varied from lively to livid.

In the end, coalition representatives were able to reach agreement on the type of candidate selection system they would like to employ: a structured series of committees, with candidates selected by local committees, approved or rejected by regional committees and disputes resolved by a national committee of party leaders and independents. However, there is still no firm agreement among these leftist factions over whether or not they will actually form an electoral coalition (the biggest problems seem to be coming from the PPP, which appears to view itself as not needing the other parties), which makes the candidate selection system moot.

The Candidate Selection sessions were repeated in the West Bank, starting in mid-March, with discussion on organizing coalitions folded in. The forum was a mixed success in that discussion was good, but senior members of several of the democratic parties were not in attendance.

Women's Training

Ten Palestinian participants were recruited to participate in the Institute's campaign school for women candidates in Amman, scheduled for March 28-April 1. They joined more than 70 female political activists from Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan and Iraq in a series of skills-building workshops and networking activities. The goal of the training was to give participants practice in hands-on political tactics including fundraising, working with the news media, developing coalitions, and building political parties. The *Partners in Participation – Win with Women* program is divided into three main tracks: running winning campaigns, political advocacy and advanced communication skills. Speakers slated to address the group included: The Honorable Amina Ouchelh, Member of Parliament from Morocco, The Honorable Zainab Fayzey, Member of Parliament from Egypt, H.E. Dr. Munther Al Share, Minister of Political Development in Jordan and David Hale, Charges d'Affairs at the American Embassy in Jordan. Other speakers include a regional roundtable of women journalists and Dr. Rola Dashti, a leading activist in the women's suffrage movement in Kuwait.

Dissemination of Information and Materials

To expand the reach of the Institute's political party programming, training manuals, workshop reports and other materials are made available on NDI's Parties Online website (<http://ndi-wbg.org/eng/>). The website contains links to numerous resources for political parties, including manuals and handouts used in NDI trainings on topics such as: campaign planning, candidate selection, message development, coalition best practices and increasing women's participation. Additionally, the Institute's statements regarding the voter registration process, the presidential election appear on the website in both English and Arabic. The website received 2624 visitors over the past quarter, with the number of visitors rising steadily each month.

IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This program has the following key objectives:

- *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;*
 - *Provide candidates for public office with the skills necessary to organize a comprehensive electoral effort and communicate more personally and effectively with voters;*
 - *Provide party and campaign activists with training and practice that will maximize their contribution to the campaign and the electoral process; and*
 - *Provide women candidates with the opportunity to network and exchange experiences with their counterparts in the Levant region.*
- NDI has continued to find a consistently high level of demand among both old and new partners for campaign and election-related training. For the first time, the Palestinian People's Party participated in NDI training in an official capacity.

- Training was provided for dozens of campaign managers from four Palestinian political parties;
- The Institute held discussion forums on coalition building and candidate selection for the members of the PDC.
- The vast majority of participants in NDI's trainings for campaign managers indicated that the workshops were good or excellent in all respects (see the attached evaluation sheets.)

V. EVALUATION

As a result of the trust built over time between NDI staff on the ground and political party officials, the Institute has experienced a consistent increase in requests for consultations, advice, training and assistance on a number of topics, including highly sensitive internal party issues such as party structure, leadership selection, candidate selection processes and party discipline.

Fateh and PDC participants in NDI's campaign schools who worked on behalf of their parties in the first round of local elections and/or January presidential election reported back that the techniques they learned made a particular difference in their ability to organize a team and communicate more effectively with voters.

As a result of this training, and accompanying consultations with party leaders, the Institute has seen clear campaign structures form and function in several political organizations that were previously unsure of how to approach elections. This is particularly true in Gaza, where parties and factions are especially interested in and responsive to the program. Election day get-out-the-vote efforts have been increasingly better organized, particularly when examining the improvements made by parties from the December 2004 local elections, through the January 2005 presidential and local elections. Party field organizations are better put together and better able to get voters to the polls and to drive an organized, energetic electoral campaign.

Voter contact has made the biggest impact to date of the topics covered in this program. Several candidates who were participants in the training reported back from the first round of local elections that door-to-door canvassing was particularly successful, and appeared to affect the influence of clan and family voting.

Additionally, at the request of its political party partners, NDI composed an options paper outlining the general practices employed by political parties in choosing candidates for public office. This document has been used by several parties and factions in their current internal debates over how candidates will be selected. NDI staff consult with party officials during these discussions.

The success of the PDC to date has been mixed, largely because senior party officials are experiencing difficulties negotiating an agreement that would be acceptable to all concerned. However, member parties have asked NDI to remain engaged and to become more involved in facilitating discussions and negotiations regarding what the coalition's operational structures might be. Participants recently reported that NDI's discussion forums for the PDC engendered the most progress that has been made on working out these issues.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

- Next quarter NDI will conduct a series of candidate trainings and training for political party election observers.