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MEPI in 2009—apply for a grant!

- The Tunis Regional Office has almost \$2 million to support grants in the region.
- Details on how to apply can be found on page three or with your local MEPI committee.
- Make this the year to become involved with your community...and MEPI activities!

Political Training of Women Candidates for Local Elections in Morocco



Women participating in political training conducted by IRI and NDI

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) launched a training campaign for Moroccan women candidates in advance of the upcoming municipal elections on June 12, 2009. The political training is a MEPI-funded project, which aims to support women candidates from several regions across the Kingdom, and consists of more than 40 training sessions in Arabic and Berber (Amazigh) languages. The training aims to provide women with campaign methods, funding techniques and communication skills

to better target their outreach efforts and strengthen their ability to serve as strong representatives for their communities.

This initiative is especially timely as it comes in preparation for the first local elections in which Moroccan women are guaranteed a quota of 12 percent of Municipal Council seats. Currently, women hold less than 1% of the seats. A participant in the training, Mrs Latifa Abdourabbihi, stated that: "This training came at the right time with the right information I wanted to learn about candidacy ." *(Continued on page 2)*

WILpower: A Two-day Moot Court Competition

WILpower, MEPI's Women in Law training program for young women lawyers, held its second regional conference at the Dead Sea, Jordan from May 2-7. The young women lawyers, all under the age of 35, traveled from the West Bank, Lebanon, Kuwait, and the UAE to take part in the six-day event. The highlight of the week was a two-day moot court competition designed to build the women's technical legal abilities, with a focus on research skills and oral argumentation.



Women participating the Law training program

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Political Training of Women Candidates for Local Elections in Morocco

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A training session conducted by IRI



Participants during a role playing exercise on campaign techniques

To maximize impact and efficiency, IRI and NDI organized their efforts geographically. IRI has been conducting training in the northern part of Morocco, while NDI has been working with women in the south.

The vast majority of women participants were identified as probable candidates by their respective political parties and asked to attend in-depth, two-day preparatory workshops.

The series of training sessions conducted by IRI and NDI attracted a large number of women from different Moroccan cities representing different political parties and women’s associations. The training supported women from a variety of age groups, socioeconomic and educational levels. In fact, a quarter of the participants were under the age of 35.

While all their demographics varied, they shared one common characteristic: a strong interest in women’s participation in local governance.

NDI and IRI provided intensive and interactive training sessions on candidacy to 3,763 women from various political parties and women’s associations in the southern and northern regions of Morocco.

The training “provides all the necessary knowledge, and techniques that will help the women run a good campaign and compete with men.” —NDI participant

Participant interviews showed their assessment of the program. Mrs. Malika Biti, communal counselor in Agadir and a participant in the NDI training in Taroudant stated: “This training will permit women to be confident when running their campaign. It provides all the necessary knowledge, overview of the changes to the communal charter and the technical sides of a campaign that will help the women run a good campaign and compete with men.”

Ohounnou Saidia, a participant in the political training conducted by IRI stated: “I attended the IRI Khemisset training. I believe that the training encouraged all participants to take part in the 2009 municipal elections and the trainer did a wonderful job teaching women that this was their responsibility.”

Ohounnou Saidia goes on

“I am happy to say that we learned new strategies from these trainings. I started to learn more about how I could utilize technology in my campaign.” — IRI participant

to add “I am happy to say that we learned new strategies from these trainings. I started to learn more about how I could utilize technology in my campaign. These trainings really opened doors for members of our political party.”

The outpouring of local interest and attendance rates showed that the training was a tremendous success. This was also recognized by extensive press coverage of the activities.

Local NGOs Supporting Political Participation in 2009 Moroccan Local Elections



Participants in the campaign

In coordination with over 160 associations from eight different regions in Morocco, the Moroccan Forum for Democracy and Governance (MFDG) and the Mohammedia Association for the Moralisation of Public Life (AMOVIP) are leading a campaign to increase voter registration prior to the 2009 Moroccan Local Elections to be held on June 12th, 2009.

The program has led to significant interaction between Civil Society and the public in the following cities: Casablanca, Benslimane, Kénifra and Khemisset— and very soon in Marrakech, Agadir, Asilah and Salé— where MFDG and AMOVIP will hold several workshops for local NGOs to conduct Training of Trainers for 160 NGO youth leaders.

A total of 264 campaigners are holding gatherings to encourage debate on electoral issues, educate voters, and promote public participation for the 2009 municipal elections.

During the last four workshops, over 100 NGOs attended the trainings and 196 representatives of associations participated.

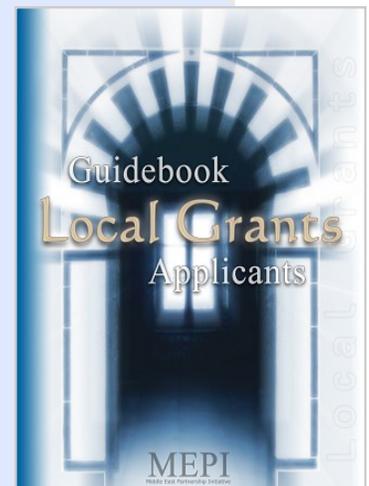
In the future, all participants are expected to act as a team to carry out a nation wide "Get Out the Vote" campaign. Trained activists will reach out to roughly 10,000 citizens via SMS, door to door campaigns and a website in order to increase voter turnout among eligible Moroccan voters and challenge the trend of low voter turnout that has plagued previous elections.

*Become a partner
for reform !*

Submit your grant applications now!

Funding is available now for Local Grants. Please contact your country's US Embassy MEPI Committee and see the guidebook available on our [website](http://www.medregion.mepi.state.gov) for step-by-step instructions in English, Arabic, or French!

www.medregion.mepi.state.gov





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ABOUT MEPI:

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), located within the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, assists efforts to expand political participation, strengthen civil society and the rule of law, empower women and youth, create educational opportunities, and foster economic reform throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

MEPI Regional Office, Tunis

Housed at the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, the Regional Office administers MEPI local programs in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and West Bank/Gaza, accounting for more than \$2 million in program funding each year. In addition to coordinating with the U.S. Embassies throughout the region, the Tunis RO organizes conferences (such as the Business Women's Summit and Student Leaders Alumni Conference), facilitates exchange programs (such as the Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program and the Students Leaders program), and provides a variety of funding opportunities (such as the MEPI Local Grants program and Civil Society Grants), as well as supporting visits, seminars, and training programs designed to advance reform.



WILpower: A Two-day Moot Court Competition

(Continued from page 1)

WILpower member Roula Derbass, a young lawyer from Lebanon, developed all of the materials for the mock trial, which centered on a 1938 legal action filed by relatives of the prominent Arab poet May Ziyadeh, who was the long-distance love of famed writer Khalil Gibran. Her family accused her of insan-



Roula Derbass

ity after they discovered her wish to give all of her money to the Egyptian and Lebanese governments after her death. The idea to use this interesting case came to Derbass after she read a book of love letters between the two es-

teemed authors and then learned about the controversial court case. The participants found the historical story intriguing, and they were keen to learn more about it, especially from a legal perspective.

The 22 participating women spent two days

preparing under the guidance of Ms. Derbass, readying their team briefings and learning about the legal systems of each others' countries in the process. On the day of the competition, they presented their cases to a legal panel comprised of a Palestinian lawyer, a Jordanian lawyer, and a senior-ranking Jordanian judge. Many of the women never before had the opportunity to practice public speaking and oral argumentation before a judge. "The moot court not only



Participants in the WILpower Program

helped their ability to plead but also enhanced their public speaking skills," said Amy West, WILpower Project Director with MEPI's implementer, Academy for Educational Development. "Understanding the skills that can be practiced and developed in both civil law as well as common law legal systems is useful to broadening and deepening the experience of becoming a more effective lawyer in either system."