

International Development Research Centre

Middle East Special Initiatives

**Presentation to the Canadian International
Development Agency
September 2006**

Background on MESI

- ▶ Located in IDRC's Special Initiatives Division, in the Program and Partnership Branch
- ▶ Overseen by Director Tim Dottridge
- ▶ Team of 4 people

Team Members

- ▶ **Roula El-Rifai, Senior Program Specialist/Program Leader: background in -----, with IDRC since 1999**
- ▶ **Charaf Ahmimed, Program Officer, MEGGF: Background in -----, formerly with Partnership Africa Canada, joined IDRC in 2005**
- ▶ **Eileen Alma, Research Officer: With IDRC since 1993, background in -----formerly with IDRC's PCD Program**
- ▶ **Maurizio Iellina, Program Assistant, with IDRC since 1998**

MESI Programs

- ▶ **Expert and Advisory Services Fund (since 1992)**
- ▶ **Scholarship Fund for Palestinian Refugee Women in Lebanon (since 2000)**
- ▶ **Middle East Good Governance Fund (since 2004)**



Expert and Advisory Services Fund

EASF Background

- ▶ established in 1992 as Canadian contribution to Middle East Multilateral Peace Process
- ▶ supports Canada's role as Gavel holder of Refugee Working Group (RWG) through research and knowledge aimed at feeding into negotiation process between Palestinians and Israelis
- ▶ Overseen by Consultative Committee made of CIDA (chair), DFAIT (member), IDRC (member and secretary)

Phases 1 & 2

Current Objective of EASF

- ▶ to produce knowledge and increase capacity for policy planning and coordination by Middle Eastern parties as they seek to find and implement sustainable solutions to the refugee issue

EASF Framework

- ▶ **Creating and building knowledge, building capacity, coordination of research and activities both regionally and internationally**
- ▶ **Thematic focus on compensation to Palestinian refugees; planning for demographic change and movement of people; gauging and engaging public in debate on refugee issue.**

Compensation

Planning for Demographic Change

- ▶ Support to Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping project of land classification in West Bank
- ▶ Critical Perspectives on Absorption of Palestinian Refugees in Palestinian Territories and Israel
- ▶ Comparative Study on Refugee Return Programmes

Public Opinion

- ▶ **“Time for Them to Speak and for Us to Listen” - Educational Informative Project among Refugees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip**

« the Ottawa Process »

- ▶ **two major international stocktaking conferences on Palestinian refugee research**
 - ▶ **December 1997 –critical review of research undertaken on the refugee issue**
 - ▶ **June 2003 – served to identify gaps in knowledge and set future research priorities, and move as much research as possible into the public domain.**
- ▶ **2003 conference – over 100 experts and academics**
- ▶ **The 2003 conference brought together some 100 experts and academics including both Palestinians and Israelis, as well as a number of observers from the Middle East, Europe, and North America. Discussions proceeded according to the "Chatham House rule" which allows participants to use the information shared during the meetings, without revealing the identity or affiliation of the speaker.**
- ▶
- ▶ **The EASF also held a workshop on Compensation to Palestinian**

Current Activities

Directions for a Phase IV

Scholarship Fund for Palestinian Refugee Women in Lebanon

Scholarship Fund background

- ▶ A response to RWG gavelholder's mission to Lebanon in 1997
- ▶ IDRC asked by DFAIT to manage donor funding to program; administered by UNRWA in Beirut
- ▶ Six donors: CIDA; Qatar, United States (Department of State), OPEC Fund, Spain, France
- ▶ Fund operating since 2000, now beginning 7th year

Objective

- ▶ To support Palestinian refugee women registered with UNRWA and/or the Lebanese Directorate of Refugee Affairs, in pursuit of undergraduate university degrees in Lebanon
- ▶ Aims to ensure women with good academic records, whose social and economic circumstances could compel them to abandon their studies, will instead complete them

Results (June 2006)

- ▶ 154 benefiting from scholarships
- ▶ Most studying at BAU
- ▶ Fields of study: sciences, pre-medicine, business, mathematics, computer science
- ▶ 77 graduates to date
- ▶ 73 women continuing studies this year
- ▶ Fund to continue until September 2010
- ▶ Cumulative average of over 78%
- ▶ Several women have been first in their faculties

Issues

- ▶ Funding to date entirely committed
- ▶ Fundraising by DFAIT for program
- ▶ CIDA planning on providing \$300,000 this fall for new scholarships, will allow for approx. 15 new scholarships
- ▶ Tracer study by UNRWA on graduates commencing this year
- ▶ IDRC conducted a review of its role in managing fund, results in February 2006
- ▶ CIDA planning an evaluation this fiscal year, recommendations for future support



Middle East Good Governance Fund

MEGGF Background

- ▶ Established November 26, 2004
- ▶ Duration: 4 ½ years until March 2009
- ▶ Budget: 5.35 million CAD
- ▶ Funders: CIDA Iraq Task Force (5 million); IDRC (350,000)
- ▶ Overseen by Consultative Committee made of CIDA (chair), DFAIT (member), IDRC (member and secretary)

Goal of MEGGF

- ▶ **Increase policy-relevant knowledge useful for promoting good governance in the Middle East, with special attention to Iraq**

Working Definition of « Good Governance »

- ▶ Promotion of free and democratic space for civil society and political movements**

Framework

- ▶ **Promotion of freedom of association and expression**
- ▶ **Themes:**
 - ▶ **Role of civil society as a catalyst for change and policy influence**
 - ▶ **Political institutions as a link between civil society and policy processes**
 - ▶ **Cross-cutting themes: youth, gender, media**

Political Islam

- ▶ **Research Questions:**
 - ▶ **Impact of integration of Islamist parties in political systems and influence on “moderation”**
 - ▶ **How social movements and networks, including Islamist movements, promote concepts of good governance**
 - ▶ **Room for dialogue between Islamist and secular movements on good governance**
- ▶ **Focus case studies: Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, Comparative studies: Morocco, Yemen, Egypt, Jordan and Turkey**

Activities (ongoing and planned)

- ▶ Ongoing:

- ▶ Workshop on confessionalism (Iraq and Lebanon)

- ▶ Political party development (Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain, Morocco, Algeria)

- ▶ Hamas political structure

- ▶ Faith-based organizations in Lebanon

- ▶ Planned:

- ▶ Egypt Muslim Brotherhood case study

- ▶ NGO mapping in Iraq

- ▶ Building social science research capacity in Iraq

Activities continued

- ▶ Tribalism and interaction with Islamist structures in Jordan, Yemen and Iraq
- ▶ Turkey change name
- ▶ Islamist social movements in Morocco change name
- ▶ Youth projects
- ▶ Crisis Group on Iraq and Islamism
- ▶ Arab Reform Initiative

MEGGF Dissemination

Other Relevant IDRC Programs

Social and Economic Policy - Program Initiatives

- ▶ **Peace, Conflict and Development**
- ▶ **Women's Rights and Citizenship**
- ▶ **Globalization, Growth and Poverty**

Environment and Natural Resource Management

- ▶ Urban Poverty and the Environment
- ▶ Rural Poverty and the Environment
- ▶ WadiMena
- ▶ other

ICTs for Development

IDRC Regional Office in Cairo

For more information:

<http://www.idrc.ca/mesi>