

International Development Research Centre

Middle East Special Initiatives

**Presentation to the Canadian International
Development Agency
November 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
- ▶ Charaf Ahmimed, Program Officer, MEGGF
- ▶ Eileen Alma, Research Officer
- ▶ Maurizio Iellina, Program Assistant

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)**



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
- ▶ Crisis Group on Iraq and Islamism
- ▶ Arab Reform Initiative
- ▶ Turkey change name

Activities continued

- ▶ Planned:
- ▶ Egypt Muslim Brotherhood case study
- ▶ NGO mapping in Iraq
- ▶ Building social science research capacity in Iraq
- ▶ Tribalism and interaction with Islamist structures in Jordan, Yemen and Iraq
- ▶ Islamist social movements in Morocco change name
- ▶ Youth projects

For more information:

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