

West Bank and Gaza Program Summary

Given the dynamic conditions in the West Bank and Gaza, access to current, accurate data by decision-makers is critical. Since 1994, the International Republican Institute (IRI) has focused on providing regular and relevant public opinion research. IRI has provided training which supports hundreds of women as they participate and lead in the political process, and IRI has worked with civil society towards the development of new democratic leadership.

Democratic Leadership Development

IRI supports rising leaders in their political development with in-depth trainings and consultations on subjects such as campaign management, get-out-the-vote efforts and issue-based advocacy.

In anticipation of elections in January 2010, IRI training programs provide campaign managers from democratic, independent groups the skills necessary to be effective leaders. These grassroots campaign managers will in turn provide the same training for other party members and volunteers in their respective organizations. Through this train-the-trainer approach, IRI is able to reach a larger network of volunteers and campaign workers located throughout the West Bank and Gaza in a limited period of time.

In addition, IRI continues to provide its expertise in democratic development through individual consultations. IRI began this process by carrying out strategic assessments with each of the organizations' leadership to identify areas of need and is now in the process of providing them support on issues such as strategic planning, party structure and internal democracy and communication strategies.

Public Opinion Research

In an environment that has lacked regular elections to measure public sentiment, opinion polls and surveys are instrumental tools in gauging public opinion on issues of importance, informing decision-makers and assessing the impact of events.

In addition to general political polls that gauge Palestinians' opinions, IRI and its partner, the Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD), have fielded research surrounding pivotal events including the creation of the National Unity Government in February 2007 and in-depth studies on issues such as the status of women. In March 2009, IRI and AWRAD released the second national public opinion poll where Palestinians provided their opinions on the national dialogue, the reconstruction of Gaza, the current government and future elections. The latest poll, released in July 2009, surveyed Palestinians on government performance, elections, and Fateh's Party Congress.

Due to the lack of reliable and thorough electorate information, IRI and AWRAD conducted the first voter canvassing project in the Arab world. The pilot program, conducted in the northern West Bank city of Nablus, generated information on voters' demographic characteristics, their expected voting behavior for Palestinian legislative council (PLC) and presidential elections, as well as their political tendencies. A field collection team knocked on doors of private residences within particular geographic areas, engaged in face-to-face personal interaction with voters and made telephone calls when possible. This information can now be used by democratic organizations to target potential supporters in upcoming elections.

Additionally, IRI's groundbreaking studies have included the first exit poll ever conducted in the Arab world during the 1996 PLC elections and the first post-9/11 poll in the region conducted in early October 2001.

IRI's West Bank and Gaza program is funded by the Middle East Partnership Initiative.

