

**CONCEPT PAPER FOR
AN APPLICATION TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY AND IMPROVE
GOVERNANCE IN EGYPT BY COMPLEMENTING USAID ACTIVITIES**

Project Title: Web Access for Democracy Initiatives - Egypt (WADI-E)

Submitted by:

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1.0 Objectives/ Basis/Strategy/Partnering Institutions

The US Agency for International Development (US AID) has recognized the need for **Strengthening Civil Society** in Egypt with the expected results of better organized and more informed civil society organizations that represent citizens' concerns, an increase in the opportunities for citizen participation, and the promotion of an enabling environment for the development of civil society. Our project is designed to improve the capacity of Egyptian NGOs acting alone and in networks to promote civic awareness and participation; to advocate for reforms in laws governing civil society; and to facilitate joint democracy programs between American and Egyptian universities.

This Concept Paper is submitted by the Middle East Programs section of the Department of Global Security Engagement and International Safeguards at **Sandia National Laboratories (SNL)**, Albuquerque, NM, USA. SNL has unique capabilities that will support our proposed Web Access for Democracy Initiatives –Egypt (WADI-E) project. Over a **two-year period**, we are proposing to expand within Egypt a regional web-based network of civil society organizations that is being created by an ongoing SNL project. Our approach is to link the proposed project in Egypt with this ongoing initiative in the region funded by the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) of the US Department of State called the Web Access for Civil Society Initiatives (WACSI) project. The WACSI project is focused on Syria (with participation from Egypt, and Jordan) and is based on collaboration between SNL and the Southwest Institute for Religion and Civil Society at the University of New Mexico (SIRCS/UNM) as well as numerous partners in Syria, Jordan and Egypt.

We plan to work with the NGO Support Center in Egypt a partner of US AID to expand the WACSI project within Egypt. We will invite the NGO Support Center to participate in upcoming WACSI workshops and help promote within Egypt the civil society organizations' web-based network that WACSI is creating. Some of the WACSI partners based in Egypt who are working with us are, for example, the Arab Center for the Independence of the Judiciary and Legal Profession (ACIJLP). The ACIJLP has an ongoing campaign to reform Egyptian laws to allow women to be on the judiciary. ACIJLP is attempting to reach a broad base of Egyptian NGOs to support this campaign. Through the expansion of the WACSI project into Egypt and as a part of our proposed WADI-E project, such campaigns by the ACIJLP and other Egyptian civil society groups will be strengthened. Further, our collaboration with SIRCS/UNM will allow us to create joint democracy programs between Egyptian universities and UNM.

Our strategy will be to first hold a joint workshop in Egypt with Egyptian and US scholars and researchers as well as regional partners. This workshop will help us create links between the NGO Support Center in Egypt and the WACSI project funded by the MEPI, and publicize the WACSI web-based system for communication and dialogue among Egyptian NGOs working on civil society initiatives. The WACSI web-based system is based on information technologies for secure and private web networks (no export-sensitive technologies will be transferred to Egypt). The project will then host a second workshop in Egypt to launch and publicize the web-based system.

2.0 Beneficiary Population and Geographic Range of the Program

We will especially target Egyptian NGOs working on civil society initiatives. We will ensure that women's rights and women's empowerment groups have adequate representation

3.0 Development Plan and Activity Description

The dialogue will occur at three levels of interactions:

- Private: We will host initial round-table discussions to promote the WACSI web-based system within Egypt through a national counterpart linked with the broader regional effort, and designed to complement the activities of the NGO Support Center based in Egypt; these initial discussions will define various working groups and committees on specific issues (**First quarter of project.**)
- Web-based private and public dialogue – we will design and build a web-based system of dialogue and communication using both private, secure sites, and public sites; this system will complement the activities of the WACSI project by deepening the links within Egypt and cross-linking the participating Egyptian groups with other groups in the region (**Second to Fourth quarters of project.**)
- Public: We will launch the web-based system through a public workshop that will be used by Egyptian NGOs to speak to each other and their respective audiences; we will continually publicize the project and its web-site (**Fourth quarter of project**)
- We will sustain a web-based system of dialogue and communication using both private, secure sites, and public sites (**Fifth to Eighth quarters of project.**)
- Visits by Egyptian scholars to the US to investigate joint democracy programs between Egyptian universities and UNM (**Fifth quarter of project.**)
- Final report: We will publish a final report that will present the details of the project and its outcomes, as well as lessons learned (**Eighth quarter of project.**)

4.0 Expected Impact

We will continually publicize the dialogue process to empower affected communities, strengthen networking among Egyptian NGOs, and facilitate critiques of the dialogue process.

5.0 Technical/Administrative Capabilities in Proposed Work Area

SNL has key competencies in the areas of democracy promotion, citizenship, tolerance, civil society reform advocacy and civic education, and especially in the use of advanced technologies (such as the use of web-based data and knowledge sharing systems) to

further US AID goals in these areas. SNL is managed by Sandia Corporation, a subsidiary of Lockheed Martin, on behalf of the US Government, and receives funding from a variety of federal agencies, including the Department of Energy, the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of State (US AID, Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), etc.) SNL has an annual budget of over 1.5 billion dollars, and over eight thousand highly qualified natural and social scientists, engineers, technologists, and administrative staff.

The Middle East Programs section of the Department of Global Security Engagement and International Safeguards works to improve regional stability among Middle East countries through selected applications of science and technology.. SNL has developed and managed a range of programs and projects in countries such as Egypt, Jordan, the Gulf countries, Israel and the Palestinian territories, and others. SNL has had very successful interactions with Egyptian scientists and research institutions. In 2005, for example, 14 Egyptians scientists and engineers spent eight weeks at SNL collaborating on issues related to environmental security and receiving training.

Another relevant SNL project is the Web Access for Civil Society Initiatives (WACSI) project that has been initiated in collaboration with the Southwest Institute for Religion and Civil Society (SIRCS) at the University of New Mexico (UNM). The goal of the WACSI project is to provide an Internet-based network for non-governmental organizations working to enhance societal initiatives in Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria. Funding for the WACSI project comes primarily from the MEPI of the US Department of State. SNL, as a leading national laboratory working at the interface of advanced technology and national security, is fully cognizant of the need to promote democracy in Egypt and well able to support the US AID in its democracy promotion goals.