



# FROM MOBILIZATION TO REPRESENTATION: SUPPORTING THE INSTITUTION OF PARLIAMENT IN EGYPT

REGION  
Africa

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MADA  
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## *the* PARLIAMENTARY CENTRE

Is a Canadian, not-for-profit, non-partisan organization, celebrating 45 years in 2013 as one of the leading and longest serving organizations dedicated to strengthening parliamentary democracy in Canada and around the world. Our assessments, strategic planning and training programs, combined with research products and networking channels, help legislatures and related stakeholders measure their performance, build capacity, tackle key issues and promote mutual learning.

In short—our mission is to support legislatures in their lawmaking, oversight and representatives roles to better serve the people they represent.

## *the* BACKGROUND

The popular uprising in the Middle East North Africa region has exposed the fragility of the governance models of the Arab regimes. As a result of critical events, ensuing debates on elections and the role of political parties and state institutions, the Egyptian Parliament is expected to be central in the change promised to citizens by the Transitional Government. This is a critical period in the history of democratic development in Egypt and one that requires support from the international community.

## *the* PROJECT

Through funding from the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade's (DFAIT) *Global Peace and Security Fund Program* the Parliamentary Centre worked with two local institutions that have established relationships with members of Parliament: One World Foundation for Development and Civil Society in Cairo and MADA for Media Development. MADA works with civil society organizations to promote dialogue among media persons, academics, intellectuals and religious leaders. The Centre collaborated with these two institutions to build local capacity and to strengthen their skills in parliamentary relations. The purpose was to strengthen civil society leaders, giving them the capacity to train Egyptian MPs and parliamentary staff, to help improve the effectiveness of the country and its people.

## *the* ACTIVITIES

This project was a valuable opportunity to provide support during the fragile process of transition to a democratic model of governance. Five activities were carried out:

- ◆ **WORKSHOP** — on how to engage Parliament and reach out to MPs. The workshop invited Egyptian civil society organizations to learn how to effectively engage with Parliament. They discussed mechanisms for interaction and examined strategies for compelling Parliament to act; creating communications channels, enhancing public awareness, promoting the exchange of information, and increasing CSO cooperation and accountability.

- ◆ **ROUNDTABLE** — with NGOs, CSOs, and members of Parliament on promoting a civil society-parliamentary forum. This roundtable marked the beginning of dialogue between Egyptian parliamentarians and citizens through representative CSOs.
- ◆ **WORKSHOP** — on conducting a systematic needs assessment of the Egyptian Parliament, and develop ideas on how to strengthen the institution. Participants reviewed lessons learned from capacity assessments conducted elsewhere, producing an outline of a methodology for an assessment that worked for them.
- ◆ **WORKSHOP** — with politicians, public servants, parliamentary staff and CSO representatives on the fundamentals and international standards of Legislative Review & Drafting. This workshop provided the opportunity for legal drafters and parliamentary staff to examine the Canadian legislative process and compare this to the process in Egypt.
- ◆ **STUDY VISIT** — to Lebanon that brought together civil society actors and Parliamentarians. This study enabled Egyptian CSOs and parliamentarians to view first-hand CSO-Parliament relationships in another country. Participants met with Lebanese representatives to examine the administration of parliament, civil society-parliamentary relations, policy reform, electoral reform, the role of parliamentary committees and public budgeting.

### *t h e* ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ◆ The project brought together key actors from the political, public service and civil society to discuss the role of Parliament, citizen engagement, legislative drafting practices and methodologies to assess the needs of the future Parliament.
- ◆ The project empowered Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), political party representatives parliamentary staff and former MPs in the area of parliamentary—civic engagement, legislative practices and processes and needs assessments of Parliaments.
- ◆ The project generated interest among CSOs on the importance of dialogue, and the importance of engaging with MPs, parliamentary committees. It provided them with strategies, tools and approaches to serve citizens.

### *t h e* OUTLOOK

**Parliamentary** democracy goes beyond holding elections and encouraging citizens to vote. To be effective, parliamentarians must reach out and develop relationships with CSOs that represent citizens. At the same time, CSOs must actively engage with Parliament, monitor its activities and lobby Parliament on behalf of their members. It is a constant challenge to raise awareness and mobilize citizens for effective input into the legislative process.

In the future, it will be important to develop a comprehensive needs assessment of the Egyptian parliament, which will formulate recommendations for specific capacity building activities. It will be important to have further training and opportunities for dialogue and constructive engagement, which will consolidate and extend initial gains in the development of relationships between civil society and democratically-elected parliamentarians. It will be essential to have more exposure to models and processes of parliamentary-civil society interaction in other countries, as this will enable Egyptians to better evaluate how these may be adapted to their situation. Finally, building the capacity of parliamentarians to interact with the media and strengthening the capacity of media to cover parliamentary affairs will ultimately increase public awareness of the democratic process.



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