

**USAID Summer Seminar Series**  
Middle-East Partnerships and Other Initiatives in the Muslim World  
July 8, 2003

Speaker 1: The private sector must be involved in reform and seek to form alliances with other donors. People to people is an excellent example.

Alina Romankowski, director of the new Middle East Partnership Initiative.

Since last November the following has taken place:

1. Formation of an Intra-agency working group (within AID).
2. Programs that would be able to contribute to the partnerships were inventoried.
3. Evaluations of past education, economic reform and growth, and democratic governance programs in the Muslim World.
4. Creating a community of practice and developed an internal website
5. Created a database of and consulted with region specific and sector specific Muslim World Experts
6. Seminar series on understanding political Islam, workshop focused on promoting moderation in Pakistan and Indonesia, and proved support a workshop on US engagement with the Muslim World
7. Supporting research by CSIS on the history, traditions, and infrastructure on philanthropy in countries of the Arab and Muslim world.
8. Developed the concept for the Partnership for Progress Network.
9. Discussion with bilateral donor's areas of mutual interest and support of the objectives of the Muslim World Initiative.

USAID will have a role in all countries, including those who are affluent. The Middle East is considered a priority county. The ultimate goal is of course to touch everyone. **USAID's role** does not involve countering extremist groups. The Treasury has taken a lead on this. There isn't a direct link between poverty and terrorism, as most comes from the upper to middle classes.

There is an effort underway to define moderate. The current definition offered is renouncement of violence and signing onto core human rights initiatives including women's. More research needs to be done as this definition differs across various sectors.

The Muslim World does not believe there should be a separation of church and state

The majority of experts USAID has brought into the MEPI have been US based. Many are here on various fellowships. AID is attempting to involve those from the grassroots initiatives. In July, the State Department is bringing in a group of young Muslims. In order to get to the problem the US needs to get to the people who "don't speak English, live in huts and smell bad".

**MEPI has three focus areas:**

### **1. Democracy, Governance, and Participation**

Key Objectives: Political Participation: strengthening democratic society and civic participation. Rule of law and government transparency, strengthening the role of media in society

### **2. Economic Reform, Growth, and Development**

Key Objectives: Economic Reform: Focus on bringing about countries global competitiveness, mobilize direct and foreign investment; facilitate revenue growth in SME's (MEFTA has \$ to spend in these counties). The Enterprise Fund and Middle East Finance Corporation to support SME's (not micro credit).

### **3. Support of Educational Opportunities for Youth and Women**

Key Objectives: Education: Expand access and quality of formal education, particularly girls, higher education (university), curriculum development, access to rural areas, and literacy in Arabic and English

#### **Cross Cutting Themes:**

Internet: To what extent can IT be brought into the mix?

Women and Youth

Transparency (Economic and Political)

#### **Discussion**

The Initiative is looking for best practices as a way to reach out to people in rural areas where they are disenfranchised from their own governments. The goal is also to dealienate people from the U.S. creating an open dialogue. MEPI acknowledges this isn't going to be easy or a quick fix.

Is this going to be a top down effort from AID to grassroots initiatives?

Looks at programs on the ground, people coming in with good ideas. There will be a time for competitive grants. The state should be involved in shaping each project, taking on an active role in defining the parameters of programs and projects

What is the diplomatic angle? Alina's personal view is

The U.S. model is one the Middle East looks to us for. They don't necessarily agree with it and will make modifications of course. The strategic plan is to focus on a regional approach: are there entities in society we can partner with. There won't be a country/mission approach. Resources used for informational gathering include embassies, intelligence entities in the region. At this time we don't need another assessment team, rather how do we make and promote change.