

Where in the world is RTI



INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Starting Up

Innovations for Foreign Investment and Economic Competitiveness in the Republic of Macedonia

Landlocked and struggling to diversify its agriculture-based economy, Macedonia remains the poorest former Yugoslav Republic. Today, 37% of the population lives below the poverty line, and real wages have been halved since 1989.



Mayor Soran Zaev, Mimi Makedonska, and business leaders in Sturmica discuss strategies to boost the municipality's competitiveness in the European market.

[Photo: Miodrag Miladinovic]

Among other obstacles to economic growth, state ownership of undeveloped land, impractical business licensing laws, and corruption render Macedonia unattractive to foreign investors. Nate Bowditch, an RTI Senior Economic Growth Specialist, explained, "At first glance, Macedonia's surplus of land and well-educated youth are extremely appealing to investors. But when they realize it could take years to get a piece of land and the ability to operate, the attraction fades."

To improve Macedonia's position in the global marketplace and its chances for European Union (EU) membership by 2012, the government is beginning to act to boost economic competitiveness. Supporting this effort is the U.S. Agency for International Development-funded Macedonia Competitiveness Project. Led by CARANA Corporation, the project aims to improve Macedonia's business environment

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Paving the Way for HIV/AIDS Policy Development and Advocacy in China and the Greater Mekong Region

RTI is leading an ambitious project to support development of effective HIV policies for the most-at-risk populations (MARPs) in China and the Greater Mekong Region. In collaboration with the International HIV/AIDS Alliance and the Burnet Institute, RTI is creating replicable models of prevention, care, and treatment for men who have sex with men and for people living with HIV. The project concentrates on strengthening the sensitive policy and implementation links between national and provincial governments, and thereby strengthening local programs.

"In most countries in Asia, the HIV/AIDS epidemic remains concentrated, so there is still an opportunity to keep it from generalizing by fostering an environment where the voices of those infected and affected by HIV can be heard," said Jeffrey Sine, RTI Deputy Director for the Center for International Health.

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Shining a Spotlight on Girls' Education in Egypt

Over the past 10 years, Egypt has made notable progress to increase school enrollment. However, female literacy remains low at 59% as compared to 83% for males. The disparity is even greater in rural, Upper Egypt where RTI and its partners are implementing the



A GILO staff member works with a primary school student to pilot the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) in Arabic for the first time in Egypt. [Photo: Amber Gove]

U.S. Agency for International Development's Girls' Improved Learning Outcomes (GILO) project. The team is working

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Moroccan Leaders Listen

Local governance is evolving in Morocco. Citizens are speaking out, and their leaders are listening and taking notes.

Even King Mohammed VI, chief of state of the constitutional monarchy, has responded. He punctuated the need for greater citizen involvement in the country's decentralization process when he launched the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) in 2005 to combat poverty through community-driven development.

Under the Local Governance Project (LGP) of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), RTI is building on this democratic momentum in Morocco and strengthening provincial and municipal governments to be more transparent, responsive, and accountable to Moroccans.

The project trains local officials and their staff in innovative approaches to governance with a focus on participatory strategic planning (PSP). A process of building consensus through public forums and consultative workshops with key stakeholders, PSP helps the local governments define their community's priorities and form the development plans they use immediately to guide their spending.

In three years, LGP has worked in six of the country's 15 regions, building local government capacity in five provinces and 16 municipalities, including both urban and rural communes.

Along the way to improving transparency and accountability in Morocco through PSP, RTI has created replicable models to advance gender equality and mediate conflict in slum upgrading.

Raising the Voices of Women

Since Moroccan men and women traditionally do not share the same public spaces, LGP has taken care to incorporate a gender-sensitive approach into its PSP training.

For example, in Benslimane province, LGP assisted the rural communes of Ahlaf and Melilla to choose 32 meeting points for 64 public forums—one forum for men and one for women in each location—to give a larger number of citizens opportunity to voice their concerns and needs.



A woman from the Aoufous Women's Cooperative demonstrates how palm dates are transformed into jam, adding market value and generating income for the women. [Photo: LGP staff]

In Errachidia province, one of the poorest in the country, LGP facilitated 90 public forums—involving 3,500 women, 1,500 youth, and 2,000 men—where citizens expressed their desire for better social services and more small business opportunities for women. As a result, a women's palm dates processing cooperative was established with an LGP grant, adding value to the local production of dates by turning them into jams and other products.

LGP also partnered with civil society actors and the Ministry of Interior in 2007 to identify concrete measures for increasing

women's seats on local councils, where less than 1% of councilors are female.

Their strategy included constitutionally based recommendations for reforming the electoral code to mandate quotas for the number of women presented by parties as candidates in local council elections and reforming the communal charter to mandate quotas for the number of women sitting on the councils' executive boards.

"If you do not sit on the executive board of the local council, your influence beyond casting a vote is very minimal," said Chief of Party Christian Arandel. "So, to strengthen women's voices in local government, you must first get them into the council and then onto the executive board."

These reforms are expected to be enacted in 2009.

Resolving Conflict in the Slums

Also reinforcing the King's INDH, the Moroccan Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning launched the Cities Without Slums Initiative, a nationwide program to improve living conditions in all shantytowns, or *bidonvilles* (literally "tin cities"), by upgrading such squatter settlements or relocating their inhabitants to formal, fully serviced neighborhoods. The scope of the initiative includes more than 280,000 slum dwellers in 1000 *bidonvilles* in 83 Moroccan cities.

"The slum upgrading or resettlement process is long with many potential blockages," said Arandel. "Rumors and lack of communication spark disputes between authorities and slum dwellers that stall progress."

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Morocco (continued)

LGP has assisted Cities Without Slums to overcome these standoffs by mediating a dialogue between the housing authorities and residents to be displaced.

Outside of Casablanca, the commune of Nouaceur is a perfect picture of social disparity. It is rapidly growing and hosts the country's largest airport, yet 20% of its residents still live in slums. Local authorities requested LGP assistance with relocation of the Ennakhil slum, a 900-household *bidonville* on a former U.S. military base, when the slum residents, who had not been consulted beforehand, blocked the program.

RTI subcontractor Near East Foundation sent in a mediation unit of Moroccan social workers to collaborate with the local government officials, the housing operator, nongovernmental organizations, and the Ministry of Housing and Development. For two years, the unit worked to build trust between Nouaceur authorities and Ennakhil residents by (1) facilitating face-to-face meetings between the parties, (2) improving the authorities' knowledge of the slum population through a socioeconomic study, (3) managing information flows from the top down and the bottom up, and (4) supporting community activities in the slum, like a women's handicraft cooperative.

After this extended period of trust-building, the Ennakhil slum dwellers agreed to relocate to new housing. Three hundred households have made the transition to date, and another 600 are in process. LGP has facilitated the move by educating the residents on the financial and administrative procedures for purchasing the apartment units, coordinating their access to credit, organizing joint ownership associations in the new communities, and offering literacy and financial awareness training to each household.

LGP has facilitated slum-upgrading initiatives in the cities of Casablanca, Mohammédia, Meknès–Tafilalet, and Kénitra.

“Through collaboration among LGP, local governments,



With RTI assistance, elderly and handicapped slum residents, like this man from Ennakhil slum holding his official housing assignment paper, advocated for and received accessible first-floor units in the new housing to which they were relocated under the Cities Without Slums Initiative. [Photo: LGP staff]

and civil society, the slum dwellers of Ennakhil and other Moroccan citizens have been included in making decisions that affect their daily lives,” said Arandel. “Under this project, participatory governance has been the foundation for problem-solving and the driver of innovation.”

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Egypt (continued)

with the Egyptian government and communities to encourage cost-effective school construction and maintenance; improve classroom teaching and learning; and empower communities as leaders in school management and governance.

RTI will work with the Ministries of Education and Finance, which will build or renovate up to 300 schools in areas with low girls' enrollment. GILO will equip the schools with computer equipment and modern furniture, such as movable desks and chairs. RTI senior analyst Michelle Ward-Brent said, “Unlike traditional rows of desks, the new furniture will better allow students to work collaboratively in groups. This will increase interactivity and help improve learning outcomes.”

GILO will train up to 9,000 teachers in girl-friendly teaching practices, such as calling on boys and girls equally during class instruction. The program will also train 900 administrators and 2,000 supervisors in effective educational leadership to promote local school management and school-based reform. These approaches to decentralization will help prepare schools for upcoming Ministry accreditation.

To increase community, parent, and female engagement, GILO will help form Community Education Committees (CECs), to examine factors limiting girls' participation in education and to identify girls for school enrollment. Findings will inform decisions on a variety of topics—from determining the best locations for building schools, taking into account cultural constraints for girls, such as not being allowed to travel long distances without adult supervision; to guiding the evolution of CECs into local Boards of Trustees with at least 30% female participation.

In May 2008, RTI worked with Egyptian linguists and educators to pilot the first Arabic adaptation of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), a 15-minute test administered orally to measure students' foundation literacy skills. Test results will be used to identify learning barriers and prepare appropriate trainings to give Egyptian teachers the skills and tools they need to improve teaching practice and student learning.

As Ward-Brent said, “GILO is about bringing government, communities, schools, and teachers together to show that collaboration and decentralized education can effectively increase access to and the quality of education.”

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Macedonia (continued)

and unemployment rate by identifying industries with growth potential, addressing cumbersome property laws, and stimulating domestic and foreign investment.

With CARANA, RTI is helping mayors and business leaders pinpoint existing industrial zones that could, if assisted, serve as investor-friendly sites for growth. Project staff recently visited industrial areas in seven municipalities. RTI's field representative, Mimi Makedonska, sees significant opportunity in Bitola, a town 20 kilometers from the nearest EU country, Greece. "It's clear to Bitola that moving forward means finding alternatives that minimize constraints to foreign investment. So, they have transformed 270 hectares of unused agricultural land [not controlled by the government] into construction land and made plans for an industrial zone. Now they can continue building infrastructure to start accommodating investors before year's end," said Makedonska.

Moving forward, RTI expects to help Bitola refine its plan for managing the industrial zone, address land and licensing issues, and attract foreign investors. Makedonska noted, "USAID's Competitiveness Project focuses on attracting foreign investment but also on resolving hurdles so investors actually stick around. The project offers alternative approaches for attracting investments that can really help communities make a difference and enhance Macedonia's ability to compete."

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Where in the World Is RTI is a bimonthly publication of RTI's International Development Group (IDG). This publication is intended to inform clients and partner organizations about RTI's global activities and research areas. RTI is dedicated to improving the human condition in developing and emerging countries. RTI has worked for over 40 years in 140 countries around the world. We offer a broad range of policy support, applied research and analysis, and other technical expertise in strategic planning, institutional development, and training. Our expertise is multisectoral and spans the fields of education, health, environment and natural resources, governance, finance, and information and communication technology.

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China and the Greater Mekong Region (continued)

In China, work is being carried out nationally, but particularly in Yunnan and Guangxi provinces. The project is supporting the Greater Mekong Region from its base in Thailand. The U.S. Agency for International Development/Regional Development Mission for Asia (USAID/RDMA) is funding the effort—called the Health Policy Initiative/Greater Mekong Region (GMR) and China (USAID | HPI/GMR-C) project. The three-year effort started in October 2007.



The USAID | HPI/GMR-C project is supporting development of HIV policy for most-at-risk populations in Yunnan and Guangxi provinces in China and in Thailand in the GMR.

The project is assessing policy-related operational barriers, communication mechanisms, and feedback loops within and between national and provincial governments. Barriers hinder provincial governments in providing services such as HIV counseling and testing, peer education, and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, and in offering interventions including stigma and discrimination mitigation. The project is also helping governments develop and use accurate data for evidence-based decision making.

Although civil society participation in policy and services for MARPS is complex in China, "we are keen to work with HIV-positive and MSM groups," said Felicity Young, RTI Chief of Party for USAID | HPI/GMR-C. The project will explore models of mobilizing community advocates that can work within the context of China. "We want to increase advocates' abilities to build their own constituencies and be accountable to those constituencies," Young said.

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Selected Publications

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