

Masar Program. Spanish Cooperation.

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These are the three objectives of the Masar Program.

First, public institutions from the perspective of democratic governance, economic and social development, respect for human rights and gender equality. This seems very vague, but you will see at the end of the day that this is very concrete.

Second, modernization, professionalism, and adoption of democratic practices in the security forces, this special mention of the security forces, especially here in Palestine, is very relevant.

Third, strengthening civil society organizations, but also from this very particular perspective, political advocacy and cooperation channels in order to increase democratic governance. This is the key issue, the concept of democratic governance.

I will start with a previous experience. Before the Masar program, we already worked in governance, and also related to gender and democratic governance. Then I will go to the practical project we have under the umbrella of Masar. And then, to me the most important part is the challenges we face. I have identified three, but I will let you to decide.

Through the window of the Millennium Development Fund, we sponsored a wide range of activities dealing basically with gender based violence, violence against women, political participation of women and equal economic rights. It's a very big program. It wasn't led by UN Women but for 6 UN agencies and from the Palestinian part, it was coordinated by the Ministry of Women Affairs. We had the Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health; a lot of partners were included in this approach.

DCAF Program; this is our second basis, second pillar on governance. DCAF is the Democratic Center for the Armed Forces; it's a Geneva institution that has been working all over the world on improving democratic governance for the security forces.

In Palestine, as you can imagine that's especially tricky. So we have been working with all security forces. The idea, and you will see in the next one, is that these are the main components of the different intervention we had with DCAF. We still are working with them and we plan to continue working with them.

General security reform, is being pioneer in Palestine. I think we were the first to tackle security forces reform from the gender perspective. And that's been extremely interesting. Second one, classic support, this is Masar before Masar, so it's training for the staff of the legislative council. Even though the legislative council doesn't work, but the staff does work. So it's kind of working in the air because you cannot see immediately what you are teaching them to do. They cannot implement the practice that they are supposed to be doing. But, at least, the training is completed.

And the third part is assisting the Palestinian authority in developing so sort of Ombudsmen concept. There is no such thing in Palestine. Every ministry, every political institution in Palestine is supposed to have a complaints mechanism. But they differ a lot and sometimes it's very difficult for the citizens to know how to proceed when you have something to complain about from the public institutions. So the idea is to help them decide which way is better, whether it's better to have an ombudsman depending on the Parliament or the Legislative Council or, as it's seems as it's going to be in the future, depending on the Council of ministers, that oversees the work of all the administrations. We are working on that and we will possibly continue working on that.

And now we get to Masar. Masar started on the budget year 2012. Budget year means that we approved the grant at the end of the year, so most of these activities have been in implementation during 2013.

There are three interventions with the Ministry of Women affairs:

First intervention: with the Ministry of Women Affairs, we started targeting elected candidates. In Palestine there is not an active legislative council and part of their members are in jail. So we turned to the local government. We selected 240 elected candidates at different levels (municipal level, local council level, regional council level). And they are conducting now, precisely since February-March the training in the 12th district. The training is extremely simple. It's a five days training for every group, administrative skills, strategic planning, gender based planning, gender sponsored budgets, and legal framework. What we are doing with this approach is put the basis of how this people will be able to introduce gender in their everyday routine. I think it's a good idea; the continuation of all

this process will be a visit to Spain, to be determined with which autonomous region institutions, local and certainly some central institutions in Madrid.

It will be a study trip for decision makers in the sector of fight against gender violence. It intends to acquaint them with public institutions in Madrid. This visit took place in September. It was coordinated by the Secretary of State of Social Services and Equality in Spain which depends right now of the Ministry of Health.

The idea is basically legal, how to improve the legal framework for the fight against violence. They went to visit the central representative of the central government in Madrid, which is especially interesting because they target especially violence against women.

The second day was about how the general administration deals with gender. They visited again the Secretary of State and the Security Forces. It is very interesting because that's what we are trying to improve in Palestine in particular, how security forces target the fight against violence against women.

The regional government of Madrid has a special observatory, which is a focal point where to target their activities in some particular area, and especially violence against women, a very serious problem in Spain. But the response was very interesting, very innovative, with practical resources on the ground. So Madrid, the regional government of Madrid, had a very interesting experience to share with the Palestinian guests.

The third day is the gender perspective in the security forces. We did the same, we targeted a number of decision makers in the sector and I will show you here the participants so that you have an idea.

The interesting thing about this visit is that it was extremely innovative for the participants. Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Interior, National Security Forces, preventive security and civil defense, all these institutions were present in the visit. The visit took place in December. It was interesting to see the guest reactions of surprise "all these security things, women can also be involved?" This is the first reaction of the Palestinians participants, surprised that there is such a thing as an observatory for gender equality in the army in Spain, in the Ministry of Defense. And they were very surprised that such a progress was made. And we hope that in the future they will be able to introduce with the gender units in all the security forces the principles they saw in action in Spain.

The other thing that we have been targeting with Masar, apart from gender in the public institutions has been civil society especially the adoption of democratic practices in civil society. Together with Al Haq we are going to fund a seminar, a regional seminar in Amman, probably, especially targeting the legal aspects of international crimes and

accountability in future processes. This is a politically oriented intervention. It has to do with changes in those countries Libya, Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. We rely on Al Haq knowledge in these matters. It didn't happen yet, it was approved at the end of last year.

This is something that they call communities in practice. It's led by the Spanish International Institute for Non Violent Actions (NOVACT) and the Foundation for the Future, which I think is Jordanian, and what we are going to do is to create a network of civil society institutions in order to improve democratic processes in civil society, but through mutual intervention. The interesting thing here is that there is a process by which civil society from a south country, one of these participants countries, will be exposed to special training on this matter from knowledge from the Spanish institutions and then immediately will transfer this knowledge into practice with relations with different countries in the area.

It's this concept of training, action, consulting from civil society to civil society. We will see if it's really possible to have this kind of cooperation with institutions from Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon and Palestine.

So that you have an idea of who the Palestinian partners are in this initiative, it's Al Haq again, it's the Popular Struggle Coordination Committees, it's the Coalition for Women rights, it's Baladna, and UN in Gaza. All these will be the Palestinian partners of this initiative. And we will see how it works. We have all year to see whether it was a good direction or not.

And now let me get to what I think is more interesting, it's the challenges. In Palestine, we can say for sure that at least for the last twenty years, we've had a constant flow of initiatives to improve democratic governance in Palestine. I think we can all agree on that. The thing for me, in this kind of approach is how we can measure the impact. We don't have a proper Palestinian democratic fully functioning system, so it's a little bit tricky. Which kind of indicators do we use? the number of elections conducted according to international practices?. We cannot use that indicator in Palestine because of the occupational context that complicates things even more. That makes things even more complicated, but from the purely Palestinian perspective, it's extremely difficult to assess democratic progress in Palestine. For me it's one of the main challenges we have. So we have to be more open to implement a resource based management for this kind of approach, which is not easy.

Second challenge: as Eva said in the introduction, we are working on capacity building for public institutions, what we call "building the state", but at the same time, we support civil society and it's role of supervisor of proper government practices. So what we are doing in

fact is to place on civil society, part of the task of controlling the public institutions that are not controlled because the parliament is not in place. Parliament and any other control institution that you can imagine that exist in democratic countries. So my question is: are we being fair when we are placing all this responsibility on the civil society's shoulders only? Are they prepared to control the institutions? For instance, there is a proposal that we were discussing on whether civil society, especially media, must increase their role in controlling the performance of the security forces in Palestine. Should they control any political, social, economic, any kind of intervention in the country that's democratic? What we are doing is telling society to do so is, in some cases, to take the role of the court. I leave it open to you to elaborate on it.

And the third and last challenge is the context. We have a very weak institution, that's a fact. The budget of these institutions depends mostly on us, on foreign contributors, so we can hold them accountable to us and at the same time, they have to be accountable to their own population, which is why we're doing this, why we are doing Masar. That's one of the aspects to take into consideration when assessing Masar in Palestine.

The second intervention is the no contact policy in Gaza. If we are serious, the place where this approach of democratic governance is most needed is Gaza. But we cannot work in Gaza. In fact, we are working with the West Bank when we should be more targeting Gaza in particular.

And the third intervention is the special commission for the security sector in Palestine. You know that security sectors have a life of their own in Palestine. Police depends straight from the president and has its own ranks, its own system, there's no possible influence on the security forces sector in Palestine. It is due to the constraints of the occupation that have given us this strange situation. We have a civil police force and then we have security forces and intelligence apparatus. That's something that we have to keep in mind when designing the Masar approaches. It is completely different to work in Palestine or in Egypt and I think the conditions of Palestine are very particular.

So I'll leave you with this questions and I think that's the challenges we have to face when designing Masar.