WFD is seeking an International Research Co-ordinator to work with a Local Organisation to undertake a research project on Political Trust in Morocco. The primary objective of the Project is to better explain the low levels of trust that Moroccans report in their parliament, relative to other political institutions.

Background

The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) is an independent foundation sponsored by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth (FCO) and Department for International Development (DFID). WFD specialises in parliamentary strengthening and political party development, while also supporting electoral processes and civil society strengthening. It does this by assisting in the development of parliaments, political parties, and civil society organisations. It is uniquely placed to draw directly on the expertise of the Westminster political parties, members of parliament (MPs) and devolved assemblies, and British civil society and technical experts in all its work.

In response to the protests of the Arab Spring, the King of Morocco introduced a new constitution in 2011. The new constitution strengthens the Parliament’s legislative role and establishes the principle of gender equality. Both Houses of Parliament have developed Strategic Plans, setting out a roadmap to enact their new powers as set out in the constitution. Since 2011, WFD has been working with the Parliament to deliver on these commitments. In 2017, WFD launched a new two-year programme in Morocco, funded by the British Embassy to promote inclusive and responsive governance in the Moroccan Parliament. This programme runs parallel to ongoing work with the House of Representatives (2016-2021) and House of Councillors (2016-2020).

In 2020, WFD secured support from the British Embassy in Morocco to conduct research on public trust in key political institutions, including the Parliament. This research is intended to support WFD’s ongoing partnership with the Parliament by improving its understanding of the factors that influence public trust in the legislature and identifying ways in which the Parliament might better demonstrate its trustworthiness to Moroccan citizens.

Project Context

Political trust – that is, the trust that citizens place in institutions such as parliaments, political parties, and the courts – plays a crucial role in old and new democracies, as well as more authoritarian regimes. This form of trust is generally understood to reflect the extent to which citizens feel that institutions will work in their (i.e. citizens’) interests in the absence of scrutiny or oversight. The absence of political trust has been linked to a range of negative outcomes. Thus, declining levels of political trust is often cast as a ‘crisis of democracy.’

Low levels of trust in parliaments, which play a pivotal role in any democratic system, are of particular concern. Indeed, in many countries, and many regions of the world, parliaments are one of the political institutions least trusted by the public. In contrast, publics around the world typically report having high levels of trust in the police. Notably, the parliaments of more democratic states – which one might assume are more worthy of public trust – are typically
among the least trusted by their publics. This pattern has been observed in many regions of
the world, including the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

Morocco is no exception to this trend. Though Morocco is one of the more democratic
countries in its region, many Moroccan citizens report low levels of trust in their parliament. In
2018, when the Arab Barometer surveyed Moroccans about their political attitudes, only 21.4%
of respondents stated that they had “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of trust in the Parliament.
This was significantly lower than the proportion of respondents who reported similar levels of
trust in most other state institutions, including the civil service (38.5%) and the police (65.9%).

A review of existing research indicates that it is difficult to explain the low levels of trust that
are enjoyed by legislatures, including Morocco’s Parliament. Existing research identifies
several structural factors, such as corruption or macroeconomic conditions, that affect
aggregate levels of political trust – that is, the average level of trust that citizens report with
respect to all the different political institutions covered by relevant surveys. Yet very little
existing research expressly examines the factors that shape trust in parliaments, rather than
political trust more broadly. This oversight is partly due to an assumption that survey
respondents do not clearly distinguish between different political institutions when answering
questions about trust. However, the pronounced differences between the levels of trust that
citizens report with respect to different political institutions suggests that citizens can – and do
– distinguish between them when making evaluations of their trustworthiness

Further complicating matters, the most ‘obvious’ explanation for low levels of political trust –
corruption – does not explain why Moroccan citizens trust their Parliament less than other
political institutions. Corruption is undoubtedly a problem in Morocco, and it is a problem from
which the Parliament is not immune. Yet the Parliament is not unique in this regard; other
political actors and institutions (such as government officials or the police) are viewed as
equally – or more – corrupt as the Parliament but are trusted more. This suggests that
corruption, or more precisely – perceptions of corruption – cannot fully explain the relatively
low level of trust in the Moroccan Parliament.

Several other alternatives may help to explain the relatively low level of trust in the Moroccan
Parliament:

• Moroccan citizens may lack sufficient information about their parliamentarians and
  their activities.
• There may be a divergence between how the public and parliamentarians prioritise the
different roles of the legislature (representation, law-making, oversight of the
  executive, and constituency service), such that recent improvements with respect to
certain functions (particularly law-making an oversight of the Executive) have not
  translated into increases in public trust.
• The attitudes of Moroccan citizens towards the parliament may be heavily influenced
  by history. Thus, while the behaviour of the Parliament may have changed, becoming
  more trustworthy over time, citizens may not have updated their expectations of the
  institution.

At present, there is insufficient evidence to determine the extent to which these alternatives
do, or do not, explain the relatively low levels of trust the Moroccans report in their Parliament.
Project Objective and Research Questions

The objective of this project is to generate new research that explores the extent to which the various factors do – or do not – contribute to the low levels of trust that Moroccans report in their parliament, relative to other political institutions.

Specifically, the project aims to answer the following Research Questions:

1. How do members of the public articulate/justify the reasons behind their evaluations of the parliament’s trustworthiness? That is, what do they identify as the main reasons why they trust the parliament to the extent that they do?
2. How do members of the public articulate/justify the reasons behind their evaluations of the trustworthiness of other political institutions, such as the civil service and the courts/judges?
3. How do members of the public prioritise the different functions of the parliament (representation, constituency service, law-making and oversight)?
4. Have the public’s expectations of the parliament shifted over time? That is, do citizens report reassessing, or re-evaluating what they expect from the parliament in light of the reforms adopted in 2011?

The International Research Co-ordinator will work with the Local Organisation to achieve these objectives. In addition, the International Research Co-ordinator will conduct a comparative analysis, examining the extent to which the factors that shape public trust in the Moroccan parliament reflect broader regional and global patterns.

Scope of Work of the International Research Co-ordinator

The Local Organisation will conduct a series of focus group discussions and an analysis of existing survey data to understand better the drivers of trust in Morocco, to answer the four Research Questions set out above. The International Research Co-ordinator will provide oversight and guidance to the Local Organisation as it conducts that work. This will include providing oversight of the Local Organisation’s research methodology and implementation and providing general quality control on the research outputs produced by the Local Organisation. This will include, as a minimum, the provision of feedback on preliminary plans and analyses, as well as the draft research report, prepared by the Local Organisation. The International Research Co-ordinator will also provide more informal advice and guidance to the Local Organisation on a more frequent, interactive basis (e.g. via email and Zoom calls).

In addition, the International Research Co-ordinator will prepare a Comparative Analysis Report, examining the extent to which the factors that shape public trust in the Moroccan parliament reflect broader regional and global patterns.
Deliverables and Timeframe

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<tr>
<th>Deliverable</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Feedback on Local Organisation’s preliminary plan for conduct of focus groups</td>
<td>8 January</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Feedback on Local Organisation’s preliminary analysis of focus group discussions</td>
<td>5 February</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Feedback on Local Organisation’s preliminary analysis of existing survey data</td>
<td>8 February</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Draft Comparative Analysis Report</td>
<td>15 February</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Feedback on Local Organisation’s Draft Research Report</td>
<td>26 February</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Final Comparative Analysis Report</td>
<td>5 March</td>
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Working Days and Payments

WFD shall pay the Consultant the following (sums):

£5,000 (VAT included) payable in 2 instalments, payable within 30 days of receipt by WFD of a valid invoice to be submitted as follows:

- £2,500 at the commissioning of the Consultant.
- £2,500 on satisfactory completion of the deliverables outlined above.

The international consultant commissioned for this project is expected to provide services for up to 10 days between 21 December 2020 and the 5 March 2021.

All work under this contract will be conducted remotely.

Evaluation Criteria

We will specifically assess the following requirements:

- Knowledge of existing research on political trust/public perceptions of politics
- Knowledge or experience in the Middle East/North Africa region, knowledge of Morocco specifically is an asset
- Experience of providing remote research support to local organisations
- Experience of qualitative research methods
- Ability to conduct high quality desk research, and synthesise evidence and analysis
- Ability to communicate effectively and to facilitate discussions on sensitive issues
- Good English language skills, knowledge of French and/or Arabic is an asset

The consultant interested in this assignment is expected to submit a short proposal accompanied by his/her CV. The proposal should detail the following:

- Objectives and understanding of the assignment
- Proposed methodology/approach for responding to the ToR
- Demonstrable experience in similar assignments, including an example piece of writing
- Availability to deliver the assignment within the required timeframe and budget
Interested parties are requested to submit their proposal responding to the Terms of Reference by 12 noon GMT on Friday 18 December 2020 to Carlotta.redi@wfd.org and Cc graeme.ramshaw@wfd.org.

The email subject should read Eol – Political Trust Morocco