

MDEA Team meets USAID at IARS

On Tuesday 15 September, the Institute for African Renaissance Studies (IARS) was visited by USAID staff for a meeting that was held at the Institute's boardroom. Present at this meeting were three distinguished members from USAID, Ms Bertha Sihlahla (Regional Education, Environment and Democracy Office), Mr Mark Billera (Deputy Director at the Office of Southern African Affairs, as well as Mr Robert Rhodes who is Regional Environment, Education & Democracy (REED) Office Director. Members of the Institute included the Head, Prof Vuyisile Msila, Mr Mpho Mothoagae, Mr Lesibana Matjila, Prof Shadrack Gutto and Dr Martin Rupiya.

Mothoagae opened the meeting by highlighting the major aspects covered by the programme over the years and the vision that the Institute embraces for the future. Amongst others, he mentioned the new opportunities by the programme and these included research opportunities. There are two upcoming books on elections and one will be on East Africa and will be edited by Rupiya and Gutto. Msila and others will edit a second one on general elections and MDEA specifically.



*Back-row: Prof Shadrack Gutto, Dr Martin Rupiya, Mr Mpho Mothoagae, Mr Lesibana Matjila
Front-row: Ms Bertha Sihlahla, Mr Robert Rhodes, Prof Vuyisile Msila, Mr Mark Billera*

The meeting's major objective was to provide an overview of University of South Africa's (Unisa's) Management of Democratic Elections in Africa (MDEA) programme. This programme has been a major flagship programme of the Institute for African

The USAID delegation was very excited about the MDEA programme and the promise that it has demonstrated in South Africa and the Continent. After much probing and discussion, the USAID delegation attested on the importance of the

<p>Renaissance Studies (IARS) since June 2011. The Institute has trained 273 electoral officers from various African states over the years. This programme also remains the only formalised programme on elections run by a university in the African Continent. The USAID is the major donor for this project and has been generously funding the project over the past 4 years.</p>	<p>programme and vouched about the need to spread the practice of similar programmes especially in Africa. At the end of the meeting the Institute's Head, Msila pointed out that "the Institute is so fortunate to be linked with USAID in this magnanimous programme. With the impending books, we will certainly display why this programme needs more support. It is critical to the future of a democratic Africa".</p>
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