

The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative

Supporting Women



"The United States supports a set of universal rights. And these rights include free speech, the freedom of peaceful assembly, the freedom of religion, equality for men and women under the rule of law, and the right to choose your own leaders."

U.S. President Barack Obama, May 19, 2011

MEPI provides assistance that is responsive to the needs of women across the Middle East and North Africa because women are often the strongest advocates for positive political, economic, educational, legal, and social reform.

MEPI's projects empower women to help them strengthen democratic institutions in the MENA region. MEPI works in partnership with local leaders and indigenous organizations to increase women's political and economic participation, support women visionaries, provide training to enhance women's capabilities to contribute to their countries' development, and build the capacity of civil society to secure equal rights and economic prosperity for women and their families.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

MEPI supports projects that increase the level of women's participation in building democratic, pluralistic societies through projects training women to run for office, advance their leadership skills, and advocate for legislation that promotes women's rights in their home countries.

With MEPI support, the National Democratic Institute provides intensive capacity building and mentorship to young Kuwaiti women interested in participating in the electoral process as candidates or campaign managers and facilitating linkages

with civil society to ensure community issues are being addressed by legislators.

MEPI partners with the Public International Law and Policy Group to advise Libyan civil society organizations on the design of a fully participatory electoral system, with particular emphasis on civil and political rights for women. PILPG also works with local partners to educate and train women and youth to fully and effectively engage in the constitutional drafting process.

MEPI also works in Yemen with the Media Women Forum to recruit women and youth from diverse political and regional backgrounds to increase political participation in Yemen. Participants use media tools to target TV and radio in advocating for gender policy issues as the Yemeni government undergoes political transition.

SOCIAL AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Women shape and strengthen their societies when taking on leadership roles in politics and entrepreneurship initiatives in their communities. MEPI provides technical assistance and partners with civic leaders, policymakers and business-women who are working to effect positive change in their communities.



MEPI's Policy Advocates for Women's Issues project, conducted by Vital Voices, supported women's rights activists across the MENA region amidst ongoing Arab Spring political transitions. Participants led advocacy campaigns that promoted gender equality in the new Egyptian constitution; revised gender-discriminating laws in Lebanon; promoted implementation of women employees' rights in Jordan; and worked to raise awareness on the dangers of child marriage in Morocco. Vital Voices mentored participating women and connected them to women leaders across the MENA region, which both inspired them and afforded them the opportunity to share best practices as each policy advocacy team worked toward the common goal of advancing gender equality in their home countries.

The Voices of Women film project works with young women in Qatar to change perceptions of their roles in the society while learning video production skills. Selected short-films enter regional film competitions, giving young participants an international stage to showcase their skills and creativity. These short films shed light on issues identified by Qataris and are presented to decision makers in hopes of influencing their policies regarding women issues in Qatar.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Improving women's access to economic opportunity is critical to expanding economic growth across the MENA region. MEPI strengthens women's entrepreneurship potential by training women in organizational management and other marketable skills.

MEPI's Women's Enterprise for Sustainability project, conducted by the Institute for International Education, trains Tunisian women in technology, social media, entrepreneurship, leadership, and business management skills. By helping these women launch, build, and grow their own businesses and organizations, MEPI is building Tunisian women's capacity to lead successful enterprises.

MEPI alumni utilized the entrepreneurial skills they honed in MEPI projects to empower rural MENA women to mark the International Day of Rural Women on October 15, 2012, for their region-wide Alumni Day of Service. Alumni oversaw 17 events across the MENA region to support thousands of women seeking economic empowerment and additional income for their families by learning valuable skills and marketing their wares.

SUPPORTING WOMEN IN THE LAW

MEPI supports civil society and legal professionals to promote laws that respect women as equal members of society. MEPI also supports the professional development of young female legal practitioners in the region to engage in critical family, criminal, commercial, and international law issues because women lawyers can be powerful advocates for women's equality and advancement.



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