



# MEDREGION UPDATE

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MedRegion Office, Tunis

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### Secretary of State John Kerry on International Women's Day Women Key to Peace and Security

*"International Women's Day is more than a moment marked on a calendar. It is a day not just to renew our determination to make the world a more peaceful and prosperous place — but to recognize that a world where opportunities for women grow, is a world where the possibilities for peace, prosperity and stability grow even more... No country can succeed unless every citizen is empowered to contribute to its future. And no peace can endure if women are not afforded a central role. So today, we mark the miles women have traveled around the world — but more importantly, we commit to the next miles of the journey."*

### Tunisian Women Enter Women's Enterprise for Sustainability Business Award Competition



*The first winner in the (WES) Business Award.*

established women entrepreneurs with training in leadership, entrepreneurship, business management, e-commerce, and social media.

In the past 18 months, over 800 women entrepreneurs have benefitted from

MEPI continues to bolster Tunisian efforts to build a strong foundation for economic growth and opportunity. In partnership with MEPI and the Tunisian Association for Social Stability (TAMSS), The Institute of International Education (IIE) is

implementing the Women's Enterprise for Sustainability (WES) project in Tunisia. IIE established eight WES Entrepreneurship centers at local partner organizations in Gafsa, Kairouan, Sfax, Sousse, Tunis and Zarzis to provide emerging and

training, networking opportunities, and support through the WES centers, resulting in the launch of 48 new businesses and the expansion of 76 existing establishments.

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The WES program utilizes a dual approach by providing capacity building to the local organizations that operate WES Entrepreneurship Centers and to the participating individual women entrepreneurs. IIE also organized the WES Business Award competition to provide participants who received the training with the opportunity to strengthen their business plans and apply

for seed capital. Independent selection committees that included academics, business professionals, and entrepreneurs selected the winners based on clarity of vision, market opportunity, profitability, financial feasibility and management capability.

An awards ceremony was held on February 10 to honor the 24 Tunisian women entrepreneurs

who received the Women's Enterprise for Sustainability (WES) Business Award. The event was marked by the testimonials given by the winners and participants on the impact of the training on their lives. Rachida Gannouni, one of the award recipients, has a home-based tailoring business. Talking about her WES experience, Rachida said that she benefited from the training sessions she received in

entrepreneurship, leadership, and e-commerce. She stated that she acquired skills that enabled her to better manage her business: "Before joining the WES program I had no business plan. I wanted to expand my business by taking a big loan from the bank. Now, after the training, I have a clear vision on how to better run my business."

## MEPI Advances Knowledge of Women's Rights in Jordan

Through the "Protection of Women and Children, a Community Approach" project, MEPI is supporting AYA for Consultancy and Development in advocating for women's and children's rights in Jordan. The project brought together different community stakeholders such as NGOs, CSOs, community leaders including Imams of mosques, and representatives of relevant government entities to introduce the project and pave the ground for an effective approach to curb domestic violence



against women and children.

AYA collaborated with Al Irshad Al Osari, a local NGO in Zarqa, to organize a first public event entitled "Protecting Women and Children in Islam" where Dr. Nawal Faouri, a moderate Islamic activist, gave an enriching lecture on women rights followed



by a question and answer session. The event was attended by 120 people

The project proceeded with holding training sessions on women's rights for 131 women participants. The project has provided youth volunteers a series of training to youth volunteers who conducted a door-to-door

survey for 60 households in Hay Masoum area, made 45 telephone interviews, and met 18 community leaders. A presentation was given to showcase the findings, and volunteers started writing proposals for five local advocacy initiatives to be implemented in the near future. ■

## Entrepreneurship Promotion and Economic Empowerment of Women

According to official statistics, 76% of Arab women at working age in Israel are not employed. Business of One's Own is a flagship project for women's economic empowerment, implemented in partnership with the Economic Empowerment for Women, an organization committed to assisting disadvantaged women among the Israeli and Arab communities.



The project aims to provide 250 women

participants with entrepreneurship and

business development skills to plan and launch their own businesses to help them generate income to gain greater economic independence and become more empowered in their communities.

Currently, the project is organizing a business forum at Abu Ghosh Business Incubator to help participants network with businesswomen in the local community. ■

## MEPI Empowers Women Leaders in Gaza

Through the MEPI-funded "Empowerment Young Women Leadership" project, Society Voice Foundation (SVF) is promoting democratic values and empowering young women leaders, aged 20-30 years old, from different areas in Gaza to become active participants in their communities.



Over the past three months, SVF has worked

with 12 women grassroots centers to train 360 women on the principles and techniques of leadership, volunteerism, advocacy, and community initiative implementation.

Following the training sessions, SVF formed

five forums as platforms for the women to plan and launch community initiatives and activities.

SVF also organized 15 public awareness sessions on women's rights and conducted 13 radio programs on issues ranging from women's social and economic empowerment to women and civil society organizations. ■

## MEPI Supports Palestinian Women Entrepreneurs to Export to the United States

Through the MEPI-funded “Women Business Enabling Environment” local grant, the Palestinian American Chamber of Commerce is improving the capacity of Palestinian women-owned businesses to export to the United States.

The project is building the capacity of ten local companies to market and export their products to the United States through one-on-

one technical assistance and networking opportunities with American importers.

On February 18, MEPI Coordinator Jennifer Billings visited the Palestinian American Chamber of Commerce and two of the businesses that will be assisted by the project.

Participating businesses are defined by their innovative products. One business



is has developed an innovative infrared product which turns any flat surface into a smart board, and

another company is integrating traditional Palestinian embroidery in jewelry making. ■

### Spotlight on MEPI Alumni

## MEPI Alumna One of 100 Most Powerful Arab Women 2014



*Tawakkul Karman*

Congratulations to MEPI Alumna Tawakkul Karman for being nominated one of the 100 most powerful Arab women 2014 by the Arabian Business Magazine. Karman participated in the MEPI-supported IREX MENA-Media Project in 2009, as well as the State Department’s International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) and the Citizen Exchange Program.

To read more on the 100 most powerful Arab women of the year, please visit: <http://www.arabianbusiness.com>



### Middle East Partnership Initiative

#### MEPI Regional Office, Tunis

Housed in the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, the MEPI Regional Office Tunis administers MEPI local grant projects in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and West Bank/Gaza. Each year, MEPI provides a significant number of local grants directly to local organizations based in the Middle East and North Africa. These Grants promote reform and civic activism at the local and national levels in the Middle East and North Africa, build the institutional capacity of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and strengthen civil society.

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