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MEDREGION UPDATE



MedRegion Office, Tunis

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Our Council Our Identity



to 17, have directly benefited from the training sessions. Prior elections day, students organized electoral campaigns inside the school, drafted electoral statements, and developed election platforms. They also developed audio messages, such as "Your school needs your voice, give it to the right person." After the elections, students translated their campaign promises into action by setting up a list of suggestions, including: raising funds for the school, organizing community service and voluntary work to disabled groups, painting schools walls, fixing destroyed desks, recycling activities, and planting school gardens.

Ahmad Abu Ghosh, an out spoken and a active student from Al Aqaba High School for Boys talked about his experience in creating a radio talk show entitled "A dialogue with an official." In this show, he hosted a number of officials involved in educational issues in Aqaba to get answers to students questions and concerns.

On March 28, MEPI partner Tamreen for Training held an open day to celebrate the closing of the "Our Council, Our Identity" project in Aqaba governorate in Southern Jordan. Over the course of the past several months, Tamreen worked closely with 12 schools in Aqaba, reaching thousands of students to expose them to the democratic process and practices

by holding student council elections. Students received hands-on training on running and managing electoral campaigns, drafting electoral statements, developing audio messages, and using school radios to promote their campaigns and to address educational concerns. 120 students, aged 12

Click here to watch the video:
<http://bit.ly/17rweoS>

MEPI *MedRegion Update* Newsletter is produced by the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) MedRegion Office at the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, Tunisia.

We welcome your feedback and suggestions!

A MEPI Local Grant Engages Tunisian Rural Women in Entrepreneurship

During the annual “National Craft Fair” at Le Kram Exhibition Center in Tunis (March 15-24, 2013), The Voice of Women Association, MEPI local grantee, participated in the fair to display and sell the hand-made products that were produced during their ongoing MEPI-funded project “Investment Focused on Rural Women in Disadvantaged Areas” in Kebili governorate. The project has provided 100 women, aged 18-40, from 5 delegations of the governorate of Kebili, with marketing, managerial, and entrepreneurial skills to help them generate income for themselves and their families.

The women apply their skills in handicrafts by using natural materials to substitute for plastic-made products.

On March 19, Embassy officials visited the association booth and met with the president of the association, Ms. Neila Ibrahim, and two other members of the association. MEPI logo was clearly displayed on the exhibited products as well as on the booth banner.



The project is developing and strengthening women’s financial autonomy on the marginalized region of the Tunisian south by helping them build their capacities to achieve and maintain an adequate standard of living. In a TV news story broadcast by the Tunisian Hannibal TV, a participant stated that, “the voice of women” association gave us this opportunity to prove ourselves, break with our daily routine and at the same time it helped us learn new skills to face the challenges of our time.”

The second component of the project focused on reinforcing women’s participation in social and political life through several workshops and training on citizenship, leadership, entrepreneurship, women’s rights and democracy.

Please click on this link to watch the news story <http://bit.ly/10eYgXi>

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Promoting Women's Ownership and Inheritance Rights in Jordan



MEPI partnered with The General Federation for Jordanian Women (GFJW) to address the prevalent issue of a women's ownership and inheritance rights in Jordan.

Through a local grant project, GFJW is educating Jordanian women in Jarash and Karak, and raising their awareness about their inheritance rights.

On March, 13-14 and 23-24, GFJW organized a series of two-day workshops in Karak and Jarash with the attendance of 39 women, including women activists.

Two lawyers gave presentations on women's rights focusing on international agreements signed by Jordan such as the United Nations Convention on



the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The workshops included group sessions, in which women shared their personal

stories. One of the participants shared that she was battered by her brother when she asked to have some of her inheritance. She filed a lawsuit and won 300,000 Jordanian Dinars.

The workshops were concluded with recommendations to amend the Personal Status Code to guarantee:

- Equality between sons and daughters in inheritance;
- Call for equality in the will so that the father guarantees equal rights to all children;
- Foster the role of mosques and churches in the awareness of the a woman's right of inheritance;
- Promote the role of media and civil society organizations.

MEPI hosts Young Jerusalemite "Parliamentarians" at the America House

More than 20 young women participants, from the MEPI-funded project "Developing Jerusalem's Youth Parliament," joined MEPI representatives at the America House to further develop their leadership skills and watch the science fiction film Apollo 13."

Following the completion of a series of leadership and democracy workshop sessions over the past year, these determined young women were recently elected as members of the student parliament at Al-Mukaber High School in Jerusalem.



MEPI Coordinator Jennifer Billings and MEPI Administrator Rasha Khatib giving a brief introduction before the movie started.

To recognize their achievements and broaden their community leadership skills, MEPI's Jennifer Billings and Rasha Khatib provided a short history presentation about America's

global leadership role in space exploration.

Combining leadership roles with history lessons, they explored the early years of the

"space race," and illustrated how determination and perseverance were an absolute necessity for the success of the American Space Program. The movie Apollo 13 is based on real-life events, which gave these young women a better understanding of how leadership tested by dramatic events can bring out the best in people.

The movie screening started and ended with President John F. Kennedy's famous words "We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things. Not because they are easy, but because they are hard." ■

Spotlight on MEPI Alumni

The Launch of a MEPI Alumni Chapter in Algeria



MEPI partnered with the Center for Maghreb Studies in Algeria (CEMA) to officially launch the Algerian MEPI Alumni Chapter on March 4. The chapter will serve as a network of past participants in MEPI programs and will help develop volunteer and civic engagement activities that benefit local communities and civil society development. The MEPI Alumni Chapter is a great opportunity to share experiences, to extend the MEPI Alumni network and achieve common goals. CEMA will offer to the alumni skills building

workshops, trainings and the opportunity to participate in different regional conferences. A MEPI Alumni Steering Committee will be created which will be in charge of coordinating and implementing the different activities under the MEPI Alumni Chapter.

For further information about the MEPI Alumni Chapter in Algeria, please visit the official Facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/MEPI-Alumni-Algeria-Chapter> ■

Civic Coalition for Media Reforms and Legislation



Over two days, the MEPI Alumni Network – including participants from throughout the region – engaged with ministers and other members of parliament to discuss the development of legislation to lessen restrictions on media freedom.

This conference, organized by Al Quds Strategic Center for Studies, was entitled "Towards a Civilian Coalition for Media Reform of Legislation." ■



Middle East Partnership Initiative

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), located within the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, is a unique program designed to engage directly with and invest in the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). MEPI works to create vibrant partnerships with citizens to foster the development of pluralistic, participatory, and prosperous societies throughout the MENA region. MEPI partners with local, regional and international non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academic institutions, and governments.

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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