



# MEDREGION UPDATE

Regional Office Tunis

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We welcome your comments and suggestions.

## March 8th, 2011 International Women's Day Centenary

Theme: "Equal Access to Education, Training and Science and Technology: Pathway to Decent Work for Women"

*"This week, we celebrate the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day. It's an occasion for honoring the achievements of women. Without question, the past century has brought astonishing progress, by just about every measure, in women's health, their economic opportunities, their political power and more. Today, women are leaders in every field."* Secretary Clinton, on International Women's Day, March 7, 2011.

"Women are often the strongest advocates for positive political, economic, educational, legal, and social reform throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). MEPI provides assistance that is customized and relevant to the needs of women within four key areas: social and civic engagement, women in politics, supporting women in the law, and economic empowerment" (MEPI Fact sheet, Supporting Women). This issue of the newsletter is dedicated to feature some MEPI projects that support women across the region.

## Secretary Clinton Announces New U.S. Support for Tunisia

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton told the press "We will stand with you as you make the transition to democracy and prosperity and a better future," after her meeting with the Tunisian Foreign Minister Mouldi Kefi, on March 17, 2011.

During her visit to Tunisia, Secretary Clinton announced new U.S. support for Tunisia's transition to democracy that is designed to expand opportunities in the country and benefit different sectors in society as the country plans for its economic and political future. Clinton asserted that the United States "will support new partnership between Tunisian civil society groups and technology companies in order to get more information, communications capacities available broadly throughout society." As part of this effort,

MEPI has officially launched its first ever Information Technology (IT) Partnership Program to link MEPI grantees with major IT corporations. Microsoft Corporation is the first to join the partnership and will kick-off a new Information Technology (IT) Partnership Program in Tunisia. Through this new partnership, local NGOs will be able to access the latest computer software, hardware, and related training to improve the effectiveness of



Secretary Clinton speaks with a Tunisian Red Crescent volunteer about relief efforts at the Tunisia-Libya border

their projects, build organizational capacity, and assist with cementing the long-term sustainability of their work. ■

## Stay Connected with MEPI

E-mail: [mepi-medregion@state.gov](mailto:mepi-medregion@state.gov)

Website: [medregion.mepi.state.gov](http://medregion.mepi.state.gov)



## Moroccan Women In Politics

In the framework of women's capacity building, MEPI Alumni Network Morocco launched a five-day workshop entitled "Women in Politics 2011" (WIP). Twelve women leaders from three regions in Morocco took part in the workshop which was held on February 22-26. The workshop reinforced the role women can play in politics through training sessions, visits to the parliament and ministries and interaction with other women MEPI Alumni involved in politics. The WIP fellows showed much enthusiasm and interest to learn about ways to bring about change to their community. The workshop training enabled them to better understand politics while also reinforcing their skills to be actively involved in their communities.

Participating women met with over 10 MEPI Alumni women parliamentarians and counselors; and had one-on-one discussions with Nouzha Skalli and Anis Birou, two ministers in the current government.

These meetings were marked by enriching discussions. Parliamentarian Bouthayna Iraqui urged more women to enter in politics. "Diversity is needed in bringing effective change in politics and women are better heard when they are numerous and united," she said. Parliamentarian, Latifa Layadi, asserted that the key for women's success in the

political world is a smart combination of patience and persistence.

These unique women-to-women exchanges have changed the perceptions that the WIP fellows accumulated about politics. Fellow Hakima Allaoui stated "These MEPI Alumni women are amazing. All my fears about politics have disappeared; I understand the value of being in politics. It is imperative for women to participate in this world and start making some real change. Elections 2012: Here I come!"

In order to further benefit from each others' experiences and build a network, the women decided to create a blog: "siyassiyat," meaning in Arabic 'women politicians'. The blog aims to inspire more women by posting success stories of MEPI Alumni women and others who are in politics. Imane Aouni, the WIP fellow in charge of the blog stated: "We need role models to look up to and we want to get closer to politics through real stories from women like us".

Please click [here](#) to watch a video on the workshop training produced by the MEPI Network Morocco.

Or visit MEPI Regional office YouTube channel: [www.YouTube.com/user/MEPIROTunis](http://www.YouTube.com/user/MEPIROTunis). ■



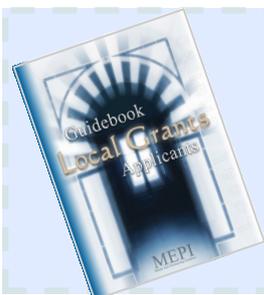
*Participating women during the workshop*



*Participating women are holding a banner*



*Women in Politics Workshop*



### Submit Your Grant Applications Now!

Funding is available now for Local Grants. Please contact your country's U.S. Embassy MEPI Committee and see the guidebook available on our [website](#) for step-by-step instructions in English and Arabic.

[www.medregion.mepi.state.gov](http://www.medregion.mepi.state.gov)

## MEPI Local Grant Project Engaging Young Palestinian Females in Leadership

MEPI local grant to Peace Players International-Middle East (PPI-ME), is engaging young Palestinian females in leadership and decision-making. Through a project entitled "BasketPal", augmenting a year-round Basketball program carried out in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, is promoting gender equality and empowering Palestinian women through engendering a comprehensive Leadership Development Program (LDP) for 16 young Palestinian female athletes aged 13-17 years old.

The project is equipping Palestinian females with leadership and professional skills to improve their future.

counselors. Each girl commits to a minimum of five hours per month of service to the community. The girls have taken on a variety of roles, including maintaining, organizing, and tidying the gymnasium where they practice; setting up the gym for competitive games; and serving as scorekeepers for competitive Peace Players' league games. A number of the girls serve as assistant coaches for the younger teams on a regular basis.

In December, the BasketPal girls prepared, planned and led a holiday tournament for the youngest players. The event which was called "MiniFest," catered to PPI – ME's youngest participants, ages 4-11.

The girls met the day before to decorate the gym and set up activity stations – six in all, each focusing on a different aspect of the game of basketball. The BasketPal girls helped lead the event, managing the stations, and serving as coaches for the "Minis."

Within this same project, the participating girls attended English language courses at the Wall Street Institute in Jerusalem. The course

includes classroom and on-line components. The girls participated in the on-line component twice weekly; and received private instruction from a certified teacher twice per month. Every two weeks, the girls take exams to assess their progress in the course. The girls have also participated in discussion groups designed to improve their English conversational skills. ■



The girls meet weekly for basketball and leadership training. BasketPal included not only sport activities but also volunteering activities and community service, field trips and professional development training with female Palestinian leaders and English language courses.

The BasketPal girls have taken on an extremely active role as volunteer coaches and



*Girls coaching the younger teams*

### About PacePlayers International-Middle East

PeacePlayers International – Middle East (PPI – ME) is a locally led charity active in Israel and the West Bank that unites and educates Jewish and Arab young people and their communities through basketball. PPI – ME operates several multi-faceted, year-round programs based on a groundbreaking curriculum developed in partnership with the [Arbinger Institute](#), which combines on-court, experiential learning with frank and open discussion.

PPI – ME works with ethnically and religiously diverse populations, including Ethiopian, Russian and American immigrants, and is committed to fostering gender equality through sport in both Jewish and Arab communities. PPI – ME also operates a single-identity capacity-building program in the West Bank that provides an additional outlet for underprivileged children and an additional training opportunity for Palestinian coaches.

PPI – ME worked with over 300 registered children in its most recent programmatic year

For more information on the activities carried by PPI please visit : [www.peaceplayersintl.org](http://www.peaceplayersintl.org)

## MEPI Enhancing Lebanese Women's Marketable Skills

MEPI grantee Safadi Foundation enhanced entrepreneurial skills of 74 Lebanese women from the deprived areas in an old neighborhood in Tripoli, Lebanon through a MEPI-funded project entitled "Promoting Women Entrepreneurships". The project aims at boosting women's economic empowerment through upgrading technical and vocational skills as well as fostering political and social participation. Around 400 family members, as well as consumers, retailers, wholesalers have benefited from the project's activities that resulted in linking the graduates to the job market.

At a first stage, Safadi focused on promoting women's entrepreneurship on an individual level. Women were divided into five groups to receive training on five technical skills: sewing, electrical sewing, embroidery, crochet, and sticking beads. During this stage women were provided with the managerial capacities requested to launch a self-manage project.

The second component of the project focused on enhancing

women's entrepreneurship on a collective level through establishing a productive unit where trained women worked as a team to respond to market specific needs.

On this collective level women were trained on the production cycle, which enhanced the teamwork spirit and group unity, and was reflected in their work performance and interaction with each other.

At the last stage Safadi held awareness raising sessions on labor law and concepts of advocacy.

Participants have not only acquired technical skills and practical knowledge but they also enhanced their social skills and created a sense of belonging to a group. They have also acquired the will and strength to change, and become active members in society, able to support their families. The women beneficiaries initiated the establishment of a cooperative, which is a good example of women skills enhancement on the collective entrepreneurship level. Safadi Foundation organized a graduation and closing ceremony that included an exhibition of products



*A participant during an electrical sewing training*



*Embroidery training*

produced by participants. The quality of products exhibited a positive feedback from visitors including a number of designers.

Following the completion of the workshops, the project coordinator and Project Assistant conducted several field visits to factories and

designer ateliers in order to create a database on potential job opportunities, which beneficiaries can apply for. A total of 14 factories and designers were interested to employ the trained women. After the completion of the project, four trained women found jobs. ■

## Welcome to New MEPI Staff

MEPI Regional Office (Tunis) is very pleased to welcome our two new MEPI Grants Management Assistants Slim Bostangi and Salma Ben Aissa.

Their biographic information is below, and we wish them both a warm welcome to MEPI!

Slim has previously worked as an analyst at Rogers Telecommunications



*Slim Bostangi*

in Canada. Slim holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Quebec, Montreal.



*Salma Ben Aissa*

Salma previously worked as an Executive Assistant with the Mediterranean Society of Logistics and International

Transport. She has also worked with the International Committee of the Red Cross. Salma holds a Master's degree in Management Consulting from the University of Quebec in Montreal. In her free time she enjoys outdoor sports, music, reading and travelling.

Slim and Salma join the MEPI Grants Unit. ■