



MEDREGION UPDATE

Regional Office Tunis

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About MEPI 4

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

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We welcome your comments and suggestions.

Dear Readers,

*In the past couple of weeks we in the MEPI Regional Office have witnessed firsthand what President Obama called "the courage and dignity of the Tunisian people" in this time of transition. MEPI seeks to create vibrant partnerships between America and the citizens of the Middle East and North Africa to empower them to build more **pluralistic, participatory** and **prosperous** societies throughout the region, and we thank our partners in North Africa and the Middle East for their important work. You are helping, as Secretary Clinton said at the Forum for the Future in Doha, to "build a future that young people will believe in, stay for, and defend."*

- Johann Schmonsees, Director MEPI Regional Office in Tunis

MEPI GOAL: Participatory societies built where citizens have the regular opportunities to play an active role in making decisions that affect their lives and in holding their governments accountable.

MEPI Empowering Arab Jurists to Watchdog Corruption, and Malfeasance in the Municipalities of the Arab Sector

The Movement for Quality Government in Israel (MQG) is training Arab jurists on the use of effective legal and civil action against corruption, incompetence and malfeasance in local government. MQG is also raising public awareness and public discussion among Arab citizens regarding the need for civil society action to promote sound public administration, accountability and transparency in local authorities, via media coverage of the legal cases handled by the project, and the project's public events. MQG strongly believes that active and involved civil society is one of the most important factors in fighting corruption. In this sense, MQG is raising awareness through a series that come as part of the MEPI-funded project "Empowering Arab Attorneys to Watchdog Corruption and Litigating to Enhance Proper and Ethical Governance in the Municipalities of the Arab Sector." These awareness raising sessions provided public



Students holding slogans "Enough corruption"

servants and agents of change in the local municipalities with knowledge on matters of quality government. MQG held a training program for 100 elected representatives for Arab municipalities, which is about 20% of the total number of the elected representatives in the Arab municipalities in northern Israel. Elected representatives from 35 of 65 Arab municipalities in Israel took part in the training sessions and learned about tools and mechanisms to work effectively, transparently and with accountability. To further their objectives, MQG filed a

comprehensive petition to the district court in Nazareth in order to promote transparency in the Israeli-Arab local municipalities by compelling them to comply with the law designating an internet website accessible to the wider public.

During the first hearing the court ordered the relevant municipalities to respond immediately. In the second hearing that was held in the second quarter, the court ruled in favor of MQG, instructing all 30 municipalities to set an internet website within 120 days.

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Guiding Principles on Civil Society Organizations

Recognizing that CSOs are essential to the development and success of free societies and that they play a vital role in ensuring accountable, democratic government,

And recalling the right to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association enshrined in the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights Defenders,

The U.S. government pledges its commitment to the following principles and its determination to work for their full implementation throughout the world:

- Individuals should be permitted to form, join, and participate in CSOs of their choosing in the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association.
- Any restrictions which may be placed on the exercise by members of CSOs of the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association must be consistent with international legal obligations.
- CSOs should be permitted to carry out their peaceful work in a hospitable environment free from fear of harassment, reprisal, intimidation, and discrimination.
- Acknowledging governments' authority to regulate entities within their territory to promote the public welfare, such laws and administrative measures should protect not impede the peaceful operation of CSOs and be enforced in an apolitical, fair, transparent, and consistent manner.
- Criminal and civil legal actions brought by governments against CSOs, like those brought against all individuals and organizations, should be based on tenets of due process and equality before the law.
- CSOs should be permitted to seek, receive, manage, and administer for their peaceful activities financial support from domestic, foreign, and international entities.
- CSOs should be free to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas, including advocating their opinions to governments and the public within and outside the countries in which they are based.
- Governments should not interfere with CSOs' access to domestic and foreign-based media.
- CSOs should be free to maintain contact and cooperate with their own members and other elements of civil society within and outside the countries in which they are based, as well as with governments and international bodies. ■



By MEPI Grants Unit

The first question MEPI often hears after signing the Grant Award Documents is “How do I get my money?”

After the DS-1909 has been signed by you and countersigned by the Grants Officer, the Grants Analyst sends an email with your Payment Package. In addition to providing you a copy of the completed DS-1909, this email instructs your organization on how to request payments, and the package includes the required documents for Payment Requests (Direct Deposit Sign-Up Sheet, Request for Advance or Reimbursement Form, and the Quarterly Report Template).

Please keep in mind the following points when completing the Direct Deposit form.

- This form should be submitted only once, unless your banking information changes.
- You should consult with your bank to fill correct data.
- One bank account should be devoted to the grant.

You should send requests for advance or reimbursement to your Grants Analyst, always copying your Project Officer and the TunisMEPIGrants@state.gov email. Please consider the following:

- If requesting an advance, ensure that the amount covers anticipated expenses until the next report submission deadline (no more than 4 months). You can consult with your Grants Analyst help you anticipate your expenses on the amount.
- All subsequent requests for payments should be submitted no sooner than the Quarterly Report submission and should cover no more than the amount required until the next report submission (please see the reporting schedule on the Award Specifics).
- Each payment must be the amount of expenditures anticipated during the requested period less any unexpended funds remaining from prior payments.
- The appropriate certified authority in your organization should sign and date the Payment Request.

For your final payment request, it is our office policy to withhold \$5,000 until receipt of the Final Report. Please plan your spending accordingly with this last point in mind. ■

MEPI GOAL: *Prosperous societies built where education, specialized skill training and an environment conducive to business development inspire innovation and create a foundation for long term economic growth and an internationally competitive private sector.*

Hands-on Trainings to Increase Lebanese Women's Employment Opportunities From WIT to Work

Women in Technology-Lebanon (WIT) launched a new project entitled "Economic Empowerment for Women through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)". This project comes as an outgrowth of the MEPI regional project Women in Technology-Middle East and North Africa (WIT-MENA), which trained 750 women on ICT, entrepreneurship, and professional development skills from low and middle income women in underserved areas outside Beirut, Lebanon. "The Economic Empowerment for Women through ICT" project targeted Lebanese women, who benefited from the training programs within the WIT-MENA program to increase their chances entering the workforce and have an income through either creating their own businesses or finding employment.

Participating women were divided into two groups based on whether their objectives and motivation were: business oriented or employment oriented. Forty-two candidates were selected for the entrepreneurship workshops and 49 were interested in entering the job market.

Employment workshops

Employment workshop participants were trained on a set of skills including: advanced computer language, social media, leadership skills, English for business, job interview tips, and how to

build a winning curriculum vitae.

Latest reports from the Employment training program twelve Lebanese women were employed by different companies

Employment training was divided into five phases: pre-employment, execution of training, job hunting activities, hiring and follow up. In conjunction with these phases, WIT staff and candidates visited companies and associations and held meetings with them in order to introduce the project and discuss possible employment opportunities for the trained women.

At the latest report, 12 women were employed by different companies and several visits were successfully conducted to the women's workplace to evaluate their work and check their progress.

Following the completion of entrepreneurship training, three participants succeeded in starting up their own businesses.

Entrepreneurship workshops

These workshops were devoted to inspire women seeking to open a small business by training them on different topics: business fundamentals; business planning and advanced financial statements; and eventually putting them on the right path to find appropriate funding companies.



Participating Women during one of the employment session



A beneficiary of the project



Participating women during the entrepreneurship session

Entrepreneurship training was also divided into five phases: fundamental training, identifying projects, sorting projects, advanced training, and access to funding.

Following the completion of the entrepreneurship training, three participants succeeded in starting up their own businesses so far. We wish the others luck in their endeavors. ■

MEPI GOAL: *Pluralistic societies built where diversity is reflected in social organizations, politics, business, media and government, and where all citizens have equal standing, protected by guaranteed rights and by independent and effective courts of law.*

MEPI Alumni Network Jordan: Model United Nations Debates Establishing a Nuclear-Free Middle East

In support of MEPI's initiatives to empower youth leadership and encourage civic participation and to better gain understanding of global diplomacy, the MEPI Alumni Network-Jordan chapter held the First Jordan University Students Model United Nations (MUN) Conference at the Jordanian Parliament. The MUN is an academic simulation that represents a forum for young Jordanians to address global concerns in a real world context and aims to educate participants about civics, current events, and effective communication, globalization and multilateral diplomacy.

Fifty students from a number of Jordanian universities participated in the conference and simulated the role of diplomats, representing different countries on the security council and took part in discussions on issues currently on the agenda of the United Nations including "Establishing A Nuclear-free Middle East".

Prior to the simulation, participating students attended a preparatory training during which, Lina



Jordan University students MUN conference



Jordan University students MUN conference

Arafat, the MEPI Alumni coordinator and Faris Muhisen, former participants in several MUNs, explained the process of the MUN, delegates division, resolution process, UN forums, UN terminologies, general rules, allies and opponents, parliamentary procedures and how to "live the character" when engaging in the MUN. Participants were also trained on the skills of debating, lobbying and decision making. As a preparation for the simulation day participants researched their assigned country and prepared their speeches, position statements and resolutions. The students were evaluated in terms of their performances and arguments used to support their positions.

The conference was inaugurated by H.E. Dr. Samir Mutawi, former Minister of Information and former Jordanian Ambassador to the Netherlands, who spoke to the students about the importance of understanding current affairs and the complexity of multilateral cooperation. ■

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Furthermore, in his ruling, the judge stated the following: "I see it as a pleasant duty to myself to express my appreciation to those filing the petition, headed by the Movement for Quality Government in Israel, for the blessed initiative that was taken in filing this petition."

In another legal case, MQG submitted a petition to the supreme court to appoint

internal auditors in 11 local municipalities in the North. Internal auditors have not been appointed in some authorities for as many as seven years. Apart from the fact that internal auditors have to be appointed by law, an authority cannot function as it should without an internal auditor. Internal audits provide an independent assessment of



the performance of the authority in order to improve

public accountability and decision-making process. ■