

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**MEPI: Increasing Opportunities for Youth throughout the MENA** 1

**Welcome to New MEPI members** 2

**Grant \$ at Work** 2

**MEPI is Changing the Lives of Rural Youth in Morocco** 3

**Details on How to Apply for a MEPI Local Grant** 3

**MEPI: Empowering Youth to Become Leaders** 4

**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.**

## MEPI: Increasing Opportunities for Youth throughout the MENA

*August 12, 2010 is UN International Youth Day and the commencement of International Youth Year.*

*On the occasion of youth day and the commencement of International Youth year, The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) dedicates this issue of the Medregion Update newsletter to MEPI-funded projects that focus on Youth.*

“It will be the young people brimming with talent and energy and hope who can claim the future that so many in previous generations never realized.” President Obama - Accra, Ghana - July 11, 2009

make to society” said the UN spokesperson on Youth Nicola Shepherd .

incorporate activities that instill a sense of responsibility among youth and foster their roles as active citizens in their communities.



The United Nations proclaimed 2010 an International Year of Youth commencing on August 12, 2010, which is International Youth Day. Under the theme ‘Dialogue and Mutual Understanding,’ the Year of Youth aims to create a platform for dialogue and mutual understanding across generations and promote the basic values of a culture of peace, respect for human rights, freedoms, and solidarity.

The International Year of Youth “is about advancing the full and effective participation of youth in all aspects of society. We encourage all sectors of society to work in partnership with youth and youth organizations to better understand their needs and concerns and to recognize the contributions that they can



Since its inception, MEPI has been committed to empowering youth in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) through partnering with youth and youth organizations to implement projects that give youth a voice and an opportunity to participate in the political and economic development of their countries. MEPI believes in the role of youth as stakeholders in society and a driving force for change and development. To these ends, MEPI has implemented around 108 youth-focused projects across the region including Gulf countries which are covered by the MEPI Regional Office in Abu Dhabi. MEPI Youth-focused projects

For instance, MEPI supported Lebanese youth to design a campaign to adopt a new electoral law to lower the voting age in Lebanon from 21 to 18.

MEPI is committed to increase educational opportunities for youth, believing education is the foundation upon which youth become active and engaged citizens. Along these lines, MEPI also funded projects that focused on the development of skills that lead to job opportunities.

“At the end of the project course, chances of integration in the media were bigger than before,” said a Palestinian participant in a media training funded by MEPI and implemented by Ekhbaryat Network for Information and Publishing. ■

## Welcome to New MEPI Members

The MEPI Mediterranean Regional Office is very pleased to welcome two new colleagues to the team: Sara Maan joins us at the Regional Office in Tunis as our new Grants Management Analyst and Jessica Levy is the new MEPI Coordinator in Israel. Their biographic information is below, and we wish them both a warm welcome to MEPI!

Jessica Levy, MEPI Coordinator in Tel Aviv, is also the Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer (CAAO) in Tel Aviv, Israel. As CAAO, she handles the Arab outreach portfolio to promote and strengthen democratic institutions among Israel's diverse Arab communities and to support coexistence initiatives. Local MEPI grants serve as a key tool in the portfolio to support projects helping underserved communities, including Bedouin, Druze, Christian and Muslim Arab populations. A first-tour Foreign Service officer, Jessica recently graduated from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School with degrees in finance and political science. She has studied Hebrew, Arabic, and Spanish and has travelled to Jordan, Morocco, Spain, and England.



*Jessica Levy*

Sara Mann, has recently completed 18 months of Arabic studies in California. Sara is a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, NY, where she earned her Bachelor's Degree in International Politics with a minor in Environmental Engineering. Following graduation, Sara served as an Army Officer with tours in Germany, Kosovo, Kuwait, and Iraq, where she earned a Bronze Star Medal. She later worked with the Department of Defense as a civilian in the D.C. area. She joins her husband in Tunisia, U.S. Army Major Nathan Mann. They have a very active two-year old daughter, Mikayla, who is also learning Arabic.



*Sara Maan*

## Welcome to MEPI RO Summer Intern

Joanna Schenke is a summer intern in the MEPI Regional Office in Tunis programs unit, where her primary responsibility is to help posts and implementers draft statements of work for local grants. After the summer, Joanna will return to Austin, Texas to complete her Master's degrees at the University of Texas (UT) in Public Policy and Middle Eastern Studies. In addition to studying Arabic and Turkish at UT, Joanna also speaks German and Spanish and hopes to use these language skills as a Foreign Service Officer after graduating in May 2011. Joanna has a B.A. in International Relations from Pomona College and was a Fulbright scholar in Turkey and Germany. ■



*Joanna Schenke*



## Prior Approvals

*By MEPI Grants Unit*

Certain Changes grantees intend to make to the budget and the statement of work in their award may require written prior-approval from the Grants Officer. Prior approvals are necessary to allow MEPI to exercise its financial and programmatic stewardship and responsibilities ensuring that modifications to the agreed project are not so extensive that it would cease to serve the purpose for which the money was awarded, or at the very least not as effectively.

According to U.S. Government regulations that govern the grants to organizations, grantees are requested to obtain written prior-approvals in the following cases:

- Change in the scope or the objective of the project including of geography;
- Extension of the project period;
- Need for additional federal funding;
- Transfer of funds among line items –under the direct cost title –cumulative amount of such transfers exceeds or is expected to exceed 10% of the total project budget as last approved by MEPI. (please note that even though the grantee has the flexibility to transfer funds from one budget line to another within the 10% threshold without authorizations, these costs still need to meet the tests of allowability, allocability, applicability and reasonableness and are cumulative.)
- Transfer of amounts budgeted for indirect costs to absorb increases in direct costs or the reverse;
- Transfers of funds budgeted for participant costs (payments to be made to participants in the project against receipt) to other budget categories;
- Change in Key personnel; as listed in the award document;
- Absence by more than three months from the project or 25% reduction in time devoted to it by the principal investigator (Project Director);
- Sub-awarding, sub-contracting or transfer of any work under the award that hasn't been approved in the award agreement as last approved by MEPI;
- And in general, inclusion in the budget of any type of cost that requires prior approval according to the cost principles (2CFR230, A-122). Copies available.

The best practice is to always discuss changes with your Project Officer and ask if it requires prior approval in writing to the Grants Officer copying the Project officer. Only the Grants Officer can determine whether prior-approval should be granted. For changes that have programmatic impact, the Grants Officer will always consult with the Project Officer assigned to your grant.

Please note that failure on your part as a recipient to obtain proper written prior approval when required may result in disallowance of project costs. ■

## MEPI is Changing the Lives of Rural Youth in Morocco

### Agricultural training for rural youth

Association du Nord pour le Développement Educatif et Economique (ANDEE) in Morocco is implementing a project entitled Agricultural training for rural youth or in French, Formation Agricole pour la Jeunesse Rurale (FAJR). Through this project, ANDEE is training forty young rural youth, from about ten villages in the province of Chefchaouen, on skills that are helping them be an integral, constructive part of the social and economic development of their communities. The project's first group of beneficiaries completed one month of training in the local Institute of Agriculture Training. Half of the beneficiaries received general agricultural training and the second half had livestock training. During this first period of the project, participants benefited from field trips to Tetouan and Tangiers, two big farms in the region. This agricultural training is providing rural youth with new opportunities that will positively impact their lives.

Most of the participants are secondary school drop-outs and the project represents a second chance for them to go back to school and to develop applicable marketable agricultural skills.

Beside the four-hour training each day, the participants are divided into four groups to organize various extracurricular activities to foster leadership and service such as soccer tournaments, basket ball games, a skit and a tournament in chess and checkers. Participants benefited from the first study tour related to the area of their training to gain on-hand knowledge of the career. In their last day at the Institute, and with the support of the project, the participants organized a ceremony for all the Institute students and staff. The event presented two plays: one entitled "The Lost Dream" highlighting life in rural Morocco and thwarted youth aspirations and the second "The Bad Student" highlighting the importance of education. The Institute's staff and other students appreciated the atmosphere that FAJR beneficiaries created in the Institute and wish them good luck with their next steps. The participants went back to their homes and remain with their families for one week while FAJR staff identified possible places for internships. While in their villages, the participants acted as ambassadors for the project and recruited other young



*Moroccan Youth Participants in the MEPI-funded agricultural training*



*Participants during a training session*

people for the second group of beneficiaries.

Fifteen participants were assigned to various regions in Morocco to benefit from practical application in their chosen field of training.

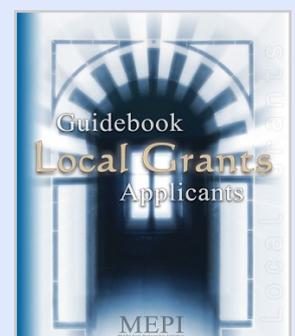
During his visit to the Institute of Agriculture, MEPI Administrator in Morocco, Riad Berdayi, had a discussion with the participants and reported that "all participants agreed that

it was the most exciting experience that they have had in their lifetime, to the point that they did not want to leave the Institute after only a month and some even left with tears.

On the other hand, the training opened their eyes to entrepreneurship opportunities. Some were planning agriculture projects while others were inclined to cattle raising." ■

## 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.



## MEPI: Empowering Youth to Become Leaders

*Public Service as a Means to Contribute to Improving Local Communities*

Injaz Lebanon and MEPI joined hands to empower Lebanese youth to become leaders by enhancing their leadership skills and helping them become active contributors in the development and improvement of their direct communities.

Through the MEPI-funded project “Empowering Youth to Become Leaders,” 35 Injaz Lebanon volunteer coaches are training 750 public school students on leadership. The project teaches students the ways to develop leadership skills such as problem solving, identifying needs, and community outreach skills needed to succeed.

Ali Maraach, a student from Mina Secondary School for Boys, said that “the leadership program strengthened my self-esteem and boosted my confidence. I am now more motivated to contribute to the development of my community.”

Following the completion of the program students choose a community service project that they would implement in their respective regions. Students from Chekka Public High School in the North needed water to wash and to drink and decided to set up water reservoirs. “I was amazed by the student’s motivation and team work” said Marc Khoury, Injaz Volunteer Consultant, “installing water containers is a great idea that would enhance their

**“the leadership program strengthened my self-esteem and boosted my confidence. I am now more motivated to contribute to the development of my community.”**

lifestyle; they were in pressing need for such an initiative.”

In the Bekaa region, students implemented a variety of projects. They painted their school walls, installed curtains in the classrooms, bought drawing notebooks for children to boost fine arts at school, conducted hygiene campaigns by bringing dentists to demonstrate teeth brushing techniques and by distributing hygiene kits and visited SOS children villages (centers that focus on family-based, long-term care for children who can no longer live with their biological families), providing children with educational books such as novels, and encyclopedias. Ghadir Asaad, student at Nabi Sheet Public High School shared that she became aware of the circumstances people go through. This experience encouraged [her] to volunteer with SOS. ■



Injaz Lebanon is an independent Lebanese non-profit NGO dedicated to providing educational and economic programs to youth and students through partnerships with the business and educational sector. Since 2001, Injaz Lebanon has harnessed the mentorship of business leaders in Lebanon to help inspire a culture of entrepreneurship and business innovation among youth in our country. In 2010, Injaz programs have been successfully delivered to over 42,000 students throughout Lebanon. For more information visit : [www.injaz-lebanon.org](http://www.injaz-lebanon.org)



### 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 projects in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and West Bank/Gaza and accounts for more than \$5 million in program funding in 2010. In addition to coordinating with U.S. Embassies throughout the region, Tunis RO provides a variety of funding opportunities (such as the MEPI Local Grants program and Civil Society Grants) as well as supporting visits, seminars and training programs to advance reform. ■

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