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MEPI in 2010—Apply for a Grant!

•Make this the year to become involved with your community...and MEPI activities!
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Dr. Ibrahim Sharqieh Wins the 2009 MEPI Photo Contest

In November 2009, MEPI launched its first Photo Contest to collect the best images taken by implementers, alumni and others in the field. We received many phenomenal photos of MEPI's work in action, captured from all over the MENA region, and Washington D.C and we would like to thank everyone who participated. One photo in particular caught the

eye of MEPI staff. The image shows a young school girl (grade six) slipping a ballot into a voting box. Dr. Ibrahim Sharqieh of the Academy for Educational Development (AED), a D.C.-based NGO that uses MEPI funding to support education, civil society, and economic growth in the Middle



The winning photo in the 2009 MEPI Photo Contest

East and North Africa, winning sent in the inspiring submission. ■



A selection of some of the submitted photos

March 8, International Women's Day "Equal Rights, Equal Opportunities, Progress for All"

On the occasion of International Women's Day, Secretary Clinton stated that "Investing in the potential of the world's women and girls is one of the surest ways to achieve global economic progress, political stability, and greater prosperity for women - and men - the world over."

Secretary Clinton presented awards at the ninth annual Vital Voices Global Leadership Awards at the Kennedy Center in Washington. The Vital Voices Global Partnership, a leading international NGO dedicated to

supporting emerging women leaders, was founded by Secretary Clinton in 1997. Every year, the Vital Voices Global Leadership Awards honor and celebrate women leaders around the world who are working to strengthen democracy, increase economic opportunity, and protect human rights.

In 2010, Vital Voices Global Leadership Awards awarded six women. Afnan Al Zayani from Bahrain received the Leadership in Public Life Award. Mrs Zayani is a wife, mother, television cooking-show star, activist and

multi-million dollar company CEO. When the Middle East and North Africa Businesswomen's Network (MENA BWN), a collection of businesswomen's associations, formed in 2006 with support from the Middle East Partnership Initiative, Afnan was a natural choice to lead the Network. Elected chair of the board of directors, she went right to work creating a vision for success.

Read more about the 2010 Vital Voices Global Leadership Awards at: www.vitalvoices.org

Tunisia and the U.S. Sign Agreement to Promote Entrepreneurship and Small Business

The State Department's Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) is pleased to announce the signing of a new Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the Government of Tunisia to promote entrepreneurship in Tunisia and expand trade opportunities for

assistance in the Middle East and North Africa.

Mr. Mohamed Ben Abdallah, General Manager of the Tunisian Industry Promotion Agency (API) and Penny K.Pickett, Associate Administrator for Entrepreneurial Development at the SBA signed the MOU.



Ms. Penny K.Pickett and Mr. Mohamed Ben Abdallah

America's small businesses.

The MOU is the result of a shared vision between the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and MEPI to support economic development, with a special focus on the unique needs of women small business owners, and to provide technical

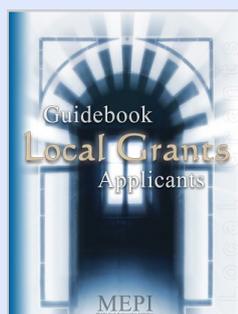
The agreement lays out a broad framework of mutual engagement and support between the SBA and the Government of Tunisia and will be followed by detailed plans of action that will result in direct and impactful change for small and medium-sized enterprises in the country. ■

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



Prior Approvals

By MEPI Grants Unit

In the course of implementing your MEPI funded project, you may come across unforeseen circumstances that require some change or amendment to the original terms and conditions (T&C's). These are contained in the award's Specific and Post Program Requirements that were sent to you as part of the Notice of Award package.

Do not panic!

MEPI is well equipped to assist you meet and surmount these challenges **provided** the required procedures are properly engaged. It is therefore very important that you initiate the required actions in time to obtain **authorized** consent to implement the necessary changes and ensure the smooth implementation and successful outcome of your project.

In order to implement the necessary changes to your project you will need **Prior Approval** for these changes.

Section 10 of the Standard Terms and Conditions (included in the Notice of Award Package) requires that any requests for amendment be submitted by the grantee **in writing** to the Grant Officer's Representative (GOR) who you know as your Project Officer (PO), and copied to your Grant Administrator or Grant Officer ten days **before** the project period end-date. The project period is clearly indicated in the Award Specifics document as well as the DS1909. Your request should include:

- Details of the required amendment.
- The reason(s) why an amendment is required.
- How such amendment(s) will enhance the successful outcome of the project.

Your project officer may endorse the request and send it to the Grant Officer (GO) who reviews the request and if acceptable approves it. You will then be notified.

The most common circumstances under which you will require **prior approval** are:

- Change in scope or objective of the project.
- Change in Key Personal specified in the award document.
- The need for additional funding.
- Extension of the period of the program. Even if this does not involve additional funding you will require a No Cost Extension (NCE).
- Transfer of funds among the budget lines under the direct cost categories, the total amount of which exceeds 10% of the total budget.
- International travel by Key Personal not specified in the original grant.

Please refer to: http://fa.statebuy.state.gov/Content/documents/Overseas_TandC.pdf for more details.

Finally, please remember the following:

- Be familiar with the Award Specifics and Post/Program Specifics of your award.
- Initiate action as soon as you realize the need for an amendment.
- Contact and discuss details with your Project Officer at post and cc your Grant Administrator.
- Implement amendment(s) only after written Grant Officer approval is received. Any money you spend without approval is your own and may not be refunded.
- Do not make any changes to your award without **Grant Officer Prior Approval**. This will **jeopardize** your grant. ■

MEPI Empowering Women throughout the Middle East and North Africa

"Regardless where she lives what she believes, what her history is, human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights."—Ambassador-at large-Melanne Verveer, Global Women's Issues, March 11, 2010

Women on the Road

In partnership with MEPI, Egyptians Without Borders (EWB), an NGO advocating for more freedom and democracy in Egypt, implemented a one-year project entitled "Women on the Road." The project targeted 50 women at the grassroots level that are committed to building democracy.

political issues, including voter education, and building advocacy and lobbying skills.

EWB conducted a series of 16 seminars entitled "Participation is Life" which stress the importance of the civic participation of women.

EWB conducted a series of workshops that focused on strengthening women's



Egyptian women during one of the workshops

The "Women on the Road" project is designed to foster women's political, social, and civic participation within their communities.

The one-year project included training workshops, symposia, conferences, and the production of information materials, all designed to promote public awareness and involvement in current

knowledge about their rights and responsibilities, while developing their skills to become more politically active.

Women learned how to design and carry out an election campaign. Following the workshops women designed seven campaigns and four of the women participated in the local elections in Egypt. ■

WILpower

WOMEN IN LAW PROGRAM شبكة نساء القانون



Online Legal Seminars for Female Law Students

MEPI's Women in Law program is hosting three online legal seminars for female law students and practitioners in the MENA region this March. These seminars are open to women throughout the region of the Middle East and North Africa.

Tuesday, March 16th and 23rd: Negotiations in Litigation and Contracts

Presentation by **Dania Dib**

The online legal training will be held on Tuesday March 16th and Tuesday March 23rd from **6pm - 7pm (Lebanon, Palestine) and 7pm - 8pm (Kuwait) and 8-9pm (UAE)**. There will be a written exercise between the first and second weeks to complete, with feedback from our peer-trainer.

To attend the **online legal trainings and the webinar**, please click [here](#) then type in your name on the sign in page.

About WILpower program:

WILpower fosters an exchange of expertise and information, provides professional development training and mentoring, and helps secure women's equal rights under the law. WILpower seeks to make legal resources available to young women lawyers, provide technical support and programs, and utilize the latest information and communication tools to improve their professional development. The program focuses on four main areas of training: technical legal skills building (to include coursework on legal research and writing skills, as well as oral argumentation and courtroom training), leadership, entrepreneurship, and mentoring. www.womeninlaw.net. ■

Global Pulse 2010

From **March 29th** through **March 31st** you will have the chance to participate in something truly exciting! Inspired by President Obama's "New Beginnings" speech to Cairo University, the U.S. Government is hosting Global Pulse 2010, an innovative, online brainstorming discussion. During this unique event, individuals throughout the world will have a chance to participate in and influence a global conversation centered on 10 hot-button social issues facing the global community within the fields of science and technology, entrepreneurship, and human development.

Why is Global Pulse 2010 important? Global Pulse 2010 will offer a unique way for community members to connect and engage, build new relationships and share their ideas on how we can strengthen our global partnerships to better address our shared global challenges.

To pre-register to attend this online event please visit:

<http://globalpulse2010.gov/register.html>

and use affiliate code: Pulse2010MEPI. ■

Prospects and Challenges Facing the Modernization of the Legal Environment in the MENA Region

Within the Middle East and North Africa-Commercial Law Strengthening (MENA-CLS) project implemented by the Arab Center for the Rule of Law and Integrity (ACRLI) in cooperation with the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), organized the Second Regional Conference on "Prospects and challenges facing the Modernization of the Legal Environment to enable Business and Investment in the MENA Region"; in Beirut, Lebanon on January 22-23, 2010.

More than 125 participants



from the project's pilot countries (Lebanon, Tunisia, Yemen and UAE) representing the legal and business community, officials of international and regional organizations (OECD, World Bank, Columbia University, League of Arab States, Union of Arab Banks, etc) as well as govern-

mental officials from the region as well as from the US Department of Commerce and the US Department of State attended the two-day conference and participated in its various sessions.

The conference interpreted key findings of the project including research, and general and specialized reports and surveys on commercial laws in the project countries. It also proposed reform recommendations related to real estate investment laws in Dubai, competition laws in Tunisia, Lebanese intellectual property

laws, and enforcement of contracts and debt recovery in Yemen.

The identified reform recommendations will be advocated in front of decision makers for further action and are expected to produce tangible impacts and concrete results as it was the case with the



first phase of the project.

The first phase of the project produced several positive outputs and impacts:

- Raising awareness on key commercial legal issues and effects on the investment environment mobilizing in each target country a large number of experts and decision makers for the reform process;
 - Formulating recommendation for reform in specific areas of legislation;
 - Building capacity to increase efficient and effective utilization of commercial dispute resolution mechanisms;
 - Supporting private-sector participation in policy-making;
 - Strengthening public-private networking and partnerships to support commercial law reform.
- It also produced immediate results in the following areas: The Lebanese Ministry of Justice as well as the Yemeni Ministry of Justice endorsed

officially the results of the commercial law assessment and the recommendations that were put forward.

In Tunisia, the Book of Commercial Companies (a legal periodical) published the recommendations identified in the national assessment report in its April 2009 issue.

In Lebanon, the government adopted the "Law of Tax Procedures" no. (44) in 11/11/2008 which was a result of the recommendations identified in the national assessment report.

Besides the training sessions targeting young lawyers and business persons on the utilization of commercial law as a mechanism for dispute resolution which will be held in the month of February 2010 in the four pilot countries, the 2nd regional conference acts as the last activity of the current phase of the project. ■



Middle East Partnership Initiative

MEPI Regional Office, Tunis

Housed at the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, MEPI Regional Office Tunis, administers MEPI local programs in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and West Bank/Gaza, and accounts for more than \$2 million in program funding in 2010. In addition to coordinating with U.S. Embassies throughout the region, the Tunis RO organizes conferences (such as the Business Women's Summit and Student Leaders Alumni Conference), facilitates exchange programs (such as the Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program and the Students Leaders program), and 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 designed to advance reform.