

U.S. ASSISTANCE TO TUNISIA

For a Better Future

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The Centre d'Etudes Maghrébines à Tunis (CEMAT) Connecting MEPI Alumni Across Tunisia

The Centre d'Etudes Maghrébines à Tunis (CEMAT) officially launched the MEPI Alumni Tunisia Chapter in December 2012 with the primary goal of creating a platform for connecting MEPI alumni across Tunisia. The Alumni Chapter, the first to be established in Tunisia after the 2011 Tunisian Revolution, has been supporting and connecting MEPI alumni in Tunisia, furthering their commitment to and engagement in civic activism, as well as their participation in Tunisia's democratic transition. In the past two years, the Chapter has created an environment in which MEPI alumni can work together to bring positive change to their country using and expanding upon the skills acquired through their various MEPI experiences. Through the efforts of an elected Tunisian Steering Committee representing various facets of MEPI programs, the chapter organizes on average 12 events per year for MEPI alumni. Opportunities include small grants to design and implement their own local development projects, nationwide networking events, thematic interest trainings and capacity-building events. The chapter also organizes volunteering events throughout the year, for instance mobilizing MEPI alumni to volunteer in conjunction with the annual United Nations International Day for Persons with Disabilities, engaging alumni to contribute to their communities and raising their awareness about people with disabilities and their rights. One unique aspect of the Chapter's pro-



MEPI Alumni During the Alumni Day of Service Organized Jointly with "La Rose" School for Persons with Disability in

gram is its close cooperation with the MEPI Alumni Algeria Chapter, both of which are administered by the American Institute of Maghreb Studies (AIMS), to jointly organize events, such as the annual thematic Sister Initiative conference based on the choice of MEPI alumni, and MENA region-wide events such as the Regional Debate that was held in Tunis on September 2013. These events provide compelling opportunities for alumni across the region to foster advocacy skills on a variety of issues pertinent to the Middle East and North Africa. To be able to reach as many alumni as possible, one of the MEPI Alumni Tunisia Chapter's central activities has been an extensive mapping and outreach efforts to build an alumni database composed exclusively of MEPI alumni organizations and individuals who have been part of MEPI Exchange programs or have benefitted from MEPI events. So far, we have 169 MEPI alumni organizations and 1,702 individual MEPI alumni registered, and we always welcome more organizations and individuals to join.

Tunisian Air Force Receives Second C-130J Aircraft

At a ceremony held on January 8, attended by U.S. Ambassador Jake Wallis, Minister of Defense Ghazi Jeribi, and Brigadier General Bechir Bedoui, the Tunisian Air Force welcomed the arrival of its second C-130J aircraft, a four-engine turboprop military transport aircraft capable of operating from dirt runways and is ideal for airlifting troops and equipment. In April 2013, Tunisia received its first C-130J which marked the first-ever delivery of this new model of aircraft on the continent.

With both aircraft in Tunis, the Tunisian Air Force now has an enhanced capability to conduct a



U.S. Ambassador, Minister of Defense, and Brigadier General During the Ceremony

full spectrum of military operations throughout the country. This “stretched” variant of the C-130J is able to transport more personnel and cargo than legacy Tunisian C-130 and will be critical in supporting ongoing coun-

terterrorism operations, humanitarian relief efforts, firefighting and traditional tactical airlift. Minister Jeribi and Ambassador Wallis also announced that on December 18, 2014, Tunisia signed an agreement to purchase eight armed UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters along with a complete logistics support and training program from the U.S. company, Sikorsky.

The purchase of this rapid-reaction asset for use along Tunisia’s border and within its military zones will improve the Tunisian Armed Forces’ effectiveness in conducting counterterrorism operations and strengthen the country’s control of its borders.

The Assistance Unit at the Tunis International Radio English Language Program

Foreign Assistance Coordinator Erin Tariot was interviewed on the English-language program of Tunis International Radio (RTCI) about the Student Leaders Program of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI).



Selfie at RTCI

©RTCI

MEPI Student leaders Alumni joined Erin on the live broadcast and spoke about their experiences in the United States and how the program had impacted their lives.

The 2015 MEPI Student Leaders exchange program provides an intensive six-week exchange program to the United States for approximately 100 undergraduate students from the Middle East and North Africa. Students are divided among up to six U.S. academic institutions where they develop leadership skills and expand their understanding of civil society and the democratic process, and how both may be applied in their home communities.

Participants have the opportunity to meet their American peers, engage in local community service activities, and observe and take part in the governmental process on the local, state, and federal levels. The program includes academic coursework and study tours to various regions of the United States. Upon completion of the U.S.-based programs, host institutes work with participants to implement civic engagement programs in their home communities.

Tunisian Mediterranean Center Engages Rural Women in the Election Process

In the lead-up to the 2014 elections, MEPI partner the Centre Tunisien Méditerranéen (TUMED) implemented the “Promoting the Participation of Marginalized Rural Women” project, which provided civic education for more than 5,000 rural women from marginalized areas in the governorates of Gafsa, Kasserine, Jendouba, Tozeur, and Zaghouan on the election process. TUMED feedback highlighted the importance of involving rural women in the process of elections and also provided the authorities with some of the main challenges women face when participating in the election process, such as the issue of presenting identity cards.



Campaign to Raise Rural Women's

A Young Tunisian Entrepreneur, Embassy Partner Beneficiary, Exporting his Products Internationally

Mohamed Beguir is a young Tunisian entrepreneur who benefited from “Souk At-tanmia” initiative, a U.S. Embassy initiative which provides potential entrepreneurs with financial and technical support to help them start their own businesses.

Through this initiative, Mohamed created his own business which consists on buying the raw material (plants, leaves or stems of Aloe Vera) and transforming them into cosmetics and other products such as body lotions and nutritional/food supplements. Mohamed plans to reinvest the profits generated from his business to plant his own four hectare field of aloe vera.



Aloe Vera Products

©OnsAbid

Since it started in late 2013, Mohamed's company has grown and is currently employing seven people including three women. In 2014, Mohamed started exporting his products to international markets.

MEPI Partner “Mouwatna Association” Considering the Needs of Employers to Improve Working Conditions for Women

A MEPI project implemented by Mercy Corps, an international development organization that seeks to support the growth and skills of local civil society leaders, especially women and youth, to create a new participatory culture and develop new job opportunities for young people in Tunisia.

As a result of its partnership with Mercy Corps, the Mouwatna Association, based in Regueb, a rural area in the governorate of Sidi Bouzid, has benefited from Mercy Corps project and is now engaging the private sector in their work. *“Before joining Mercy Corps Tunisia Leads! program, we were trying to impact socio-economic development in our regions but we were excluding the private sector”* said Hachem Aydi of Mouwatna. *“We were, for a long time, considering the private sector as an enemy, rather than considering it as a potential partner, and we didn't see that solutions could come from cooperation with its actors.”*

Mouwatna observed that in order to improve the working conditions for female agricultural workers in Regueb, they needed to offer concrete benefits for their employers – the owners of large farms in Sidi Bouzid. Mouwatna is currently developing a capacity building project involving a private vocational center in nearby to enhance women's agricultural work skills. *“If we train women to do their jobs better, with the help of professional trainers and by employing them in a governmental institution, we will ensure increased revenues and better working conditions for these women,”* said Hachem before adding, *“we proposed the idea to the local Employment Office and they didn't hesitate to join us in our project”.*

Mouwatna is also considering providing diplomas to women who complete vocational training in order to facilitate access to micro-credit and develop their own micro-enterprises. *“With the Tunisia Leads! program, we understood that in order to have a positive impact on our community, we need to develop services and build collaborative relationships with different actors – both private and public,”* said Hachem. *“We will start slowly, training a little group of women and hopefully we will expand the project to others regions and others activities, especially handicrafts.”*



Women Agricultural Workers

©MercyCorp

Announcements

TechWomen Exchange Program

TechWomen is an initiative of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. It empowers, connects, and supports the next generation of women leaders in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) from Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle East by providing them the access and opportunity they need to advance their careers, pursue their dreams, and inspire women and girls in their communities.

Application Deadline: February 10, 2015

For more information about the program and how to apply, please visit:
<http://www.techwomen.org/>

Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Local Grants Program

Enhancing Citizen Participation in Governance and Oversight in Tunisia

The U.S. Embassy announces a new Request for Application (RFA) to support Tunisia's ongoing democratic transition through direct support to Tunisian civil society or non-governmental organizations, and invites them to submit creative and detailed proposals.

Applications should work toward the following objectives:

- Build Tunisian NGO capacity to play a watchdog and accountability role post-national elections and develop effective civic education and advocacy efforts, especially for women and youth in the interior and southernmost governorates;
- Provide professional development opportunities for journalists and other media professionals to strengthen the role of media as a means of constructive communication between citizens and the Tunisian government, especially at the local level; and
- Sensitize the Tunisian public to issues related to decentralization and upcoming local elections, to include training for newly elected local government officials on intra-governmental advocacy, constituent consultation, and effective messaging.

Application Deadline: at 23:59:59 on February 15, 2015

For more information about how to apply please visit our website :
<http://tunisia.usembassy.gov/enhancing-citizen-participation-in-governance-and-oversight-in-tunisia.html>

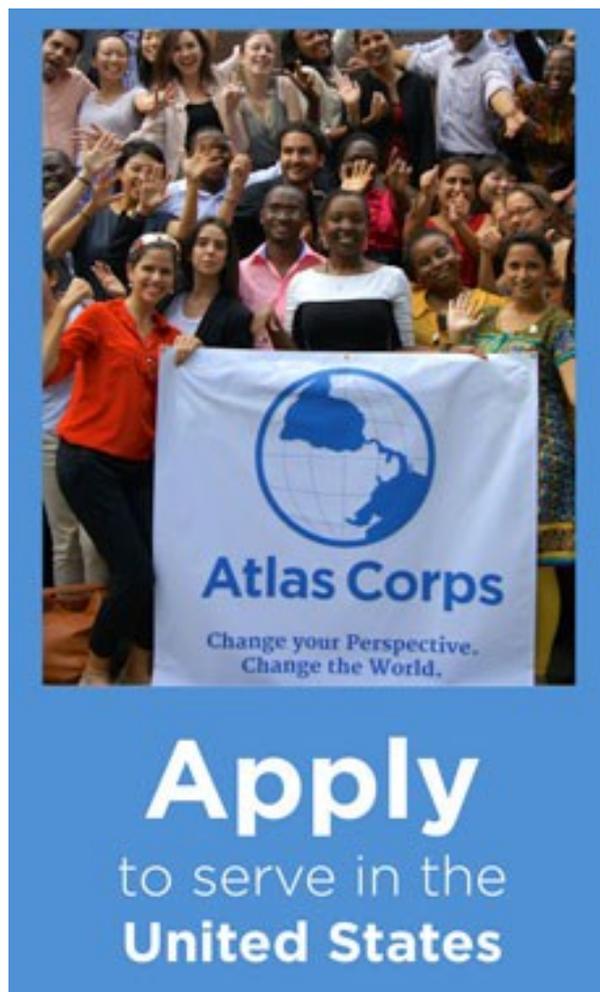
Announcements

Atlas Corps Fellowship

The U.S. Department of State is pleased to announce a special opportunity for emerging civil society leaders to participate in a 6- to 18-month professional fellowship in the United States. All Fellows will be placed at a leading social change organization in the United States.

Individuals in the nonprofit/NGO sectors with 2 to 10 years of experience, a college degree, and English proficiency are encouraged to apply. Atlas Corps has supported over 300 emerging leaders from nearly 70 different countries and seeks candidates to apply as soon as possible for their next class of Fellows.

To apply and to find out more information, please visit <http://apply.atlascorps.org>



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We'll be on the Web soon!

<http://tunisia.usembassy.gov>

Since the January 2011 revolution, the United States has provided approximately \$550 million to support Tunisia's transition, focusing on technical and financial assistance to Tunisia's economic growth, support for peace and stability, and support for civil society and democratic practices. The U.S. government plans to allocate more than \$60 million in Fiscal Year 2014 funding, building on assistance programs initiated after the revolution.

