



BAHRAIN COUNTRY PROFILE

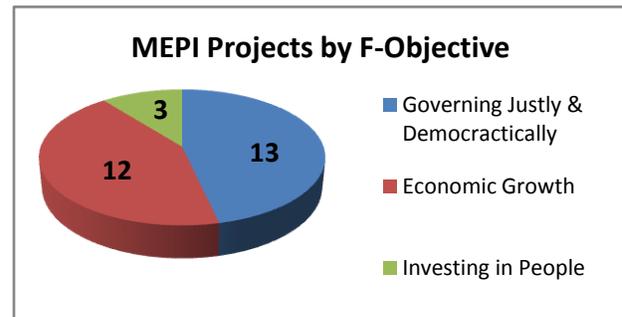
MEPI in Bahrain: Strengthening Political Institutions and Processes

In Bahrain, MEPI focuses on issues surrounding legal reform, economic growth and trade issues related to the U.S. – Bahrain Free Trade Agreement (FTA), expanding political participation, and raising awareness of major human rights issues. MEPI-funded projects help strengthen political institutions and civil society organizations, including parliamentary and municipal councils, political societies, advocacy and relief organizations, and the judiciary. MEPI continues to work with Bahraini women to help them advocate for their own causes and to be better prepared to contribute in all sectors of society. In addition, MEPI initiatives assist Bahrain in improving its capacity to support democracy initiatives and implement the labor provisions of the FTA. Related but separate efforts have encouraged the government and parliament to work seriously to address critical national issues, including initiatives designed to increase the effectiveness of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and building civil society capacity through MEPI's local grants projects.

MEPI's Bahrain Portfolio

There are currently 28 active MEPI projects in Bahrain: 23 multi-country projects including Bahrain; and 5 Bahrain-specific projects.

The pie chart shows which U.S. Foreign Assistance objectives are addressed by MEPI programming in Bahrain.



MEPI's Partnerships in Bahrain



The **Young Women Leaders** project develops young Middle Eastern advocates for greater women's rights, particularly at the community level. A total of 20 participants from four Gulf countries including Bahrain traveled to Lebanese American University's Beirut campus for a two-week training course on project development and management. During the summer 2009 session, each country group developed a women's rights advocacy project and received small grant funding to implement their projects over the course of the following nine months. The Bahraini team is promoting a public awareness

campaign which educates Bahraini workers and the general public on gender discrimination evident in government social life insurance policies, which do not permit female workers to determine their beneficiaries.

Mayasem Communications, in conjunction with MEPI and the **Supreme Council for Women in Bahrain**, held political campaign training workshops in February 2010 for thirty-five Bahraini women who are planning to run for the upcoming parliamentary and municipal elections later this year. The women who participated represent various political and youth societies, women's associations, and other local organizations. The three-day workshop featured members of Dr. Aseel Al Awadi's campaign team. She was one of four women to win a seat in Parliament during Kuwait's recent elections, and her team drew from their personal experiences and offered lessons learned to the eager participants. Other training components included volunteer outreach, voter outreach, and communication strategies.

In February 2010, with funding from MEPI, the **U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)**, signed a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the government of Bahrain to promote entrepreneurship in the Middle East and expand trade opportunities for America's small businesses. The MOU is the result of a shared vision between the SBA and MEPI to support economic development, with a special focus on the unique needs of women small business owners, and to provide technical assistance in the Middle East and North Africa. The agreement lays out a broad framework of mutual engagement and support between the SBA and the government of Bahrain, and will be followed by a detailed plan of action that will result in direct and impactful change for small and medium-sized enterprises in Bahrain.

The **American Bar Association (ABA)** continues to be a leader in judicial and legal development in the Gulf Region. Recently, the Economic Development Board (EDB), led by the Crown Prince of Bahrain, approved an extensive reform strategy for the justice sector and charged the Bahraini Ministry of Justice (BMOJ) with its implementation. ABA is an implementing partner in the EDB strategy, and the BMOJ and Department of Legal Assistance (DLA) requested continued ABA technical assistance with Ministry and DLA's upgrading efforts through 2010. ABA technical assistance will primarily support the implementation of the EDB Justice Sector Reform Strategy, continued judicial capacity development, continued capacity development within the DLA, and efforts to strengthen the legal profession.

The **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** provides technical assistance in support of implementation of the free trade agreements between the U.S. and Bahrain, with a focus on building capacity to strengthen domestic environmental governance. To this end, the EPA has provided training courses and assistance on the principles of environmental laws and enforcement and environmental impact assessment. These activities support Bahrain's ability to carry out integrated environmental impact assessments, increase transparency and public participation to reduce corruption in the environmental sector, and build capacity to measure the effectiveness of environmental laws and corresponding enforcement programs.