



Photo by Lesley Ziman



Photo by Tanmia



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# THE MIDDLE EAST PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE

## *Supporting Freedom and Opportunity in the Middle East and North Africa*

*"...in the Middle East, that same long hopeful process of democratic change is now beginning to unfold. Millions of people are demanding freedom for themselves and democracy for their countries."*

*—Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice*

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) was launched by the U.S. Government in 2002 to support democracy promotion, economic reform, quality education and women's empowerment in the Middle East. Since then, it has funded more than 350 programs in 14 countries and the Palestinian territories, ranging from support for election monitoring to improvements in the quality of education to efforts seeking a greater role for women in society.

### MEPI PARTNERS

MEPI partners include many indigenous civil society groups and local reformers as well as reform-oriented governments.

### FUNDING

Since its launch in 2002, MEPI has received \$293 million to fund initiatives leading to democratic and other reforms. The U.S. Congress has appropriated an additional \$99 million for the current fiscal year.

*Following are some of MEPI's more recent efforts.*

### TRANSPARENT ELECTIONS

MEPI provided financial and technical support in the following countries:

#### ■ Lebanon

- Voter education
- Accurate media coverage
- Public opinion polling
- Election monitoring

#### ■ Egypt

- 5,000 monitors for the parliamentary election
- 2,000 monitors for the presidential election
- Training political candidates
- Developing youth leadership skills

#### ■ Palestinian territories

- Voter education and public awareness

### EDUCATION

Several MEPI programs in the region foster youth leadership skills:

- **Student Leader Institutes** – to learn about civil rights and become effective leaders. Seven institutes have been held at American universities.
- **Arab Civitas** – a regional civic education network that promotes youth civic awareness and involvement. Examples of youth-led projects include starting after-school classes for poor students and improving health services at local hospitals.
- **Children's Books** – an initiative to provide more than 80 titles of high-quality American children's books to more than 3,000 schools in three Middle Eastern countries.

### ECONOMIC REFORM

MEPI works to develop collaboration among national economic partners and to enhance entrepreneurial skills:

- Middle East Entrepreneur Training in the U.S. has produced over 100 graduates, some of whom have launched new businesses or increased their payrolls.
- High-ranking labor delegates from eight Arab countries learned about the importance of international labor standards to free trade agreements, at a conference in Bahrain.
- MEPI supports training to strengthen banking facilities for small- and medium-sized businesses.

### EMPOWERING WOMEN

- MEPI supported a conference of 13 countries in Morocco in November 2005 to share successes of Moroccan women and activists in reforming family code laws.
- The Arab Women's Legal Network is promoting women as decision makers and educating them about their legal rights with aid from MEPI.
- MEPI has conducted four regional campaign schools to bolster political campaign skills of women leaders.