



THE MIDDLE EAST PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE

Supporting Greater Opportunities throughout the Middle East and North Africa

“...building civil society and providing tangible services to people help result in stronger nations that share the goals of security, prosperity, peace, and progress.”

—Secretary Clinton, February 18, 2009

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), located within the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, assists efforts to expand political participation, strengthen civil society and the rule of law, empower women and youth, create educational opportunities, and foster economic reform throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). In support of these goals, MEPI works with non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and academic institutions, as well as governments. Through its Washington headquarters and Regional Offices in Abu Dhabi and Tunis, MEPI has contributed over \$530 million to more than 600 projects in 17 countries and territories since its establishment in 2002.

Through direct support to local organizations in the MENA region, MEPI is strengthening the sustainability and capacity of those that serve as the region’s most dedicated and successful agents of change. MEPI has funded projects implemented by more than 250 such organizations working to advance reform in their home countries. Approximately half of MEPI’s projects are grants made directly to these local organizations.

GIVING PEOPLE A VOICE IN THEIR FUTURE

MEPI governance projects work to develop institutions and processes that are essential to an active citizenry and an accountable, representative government. These projects aim to give citizens a greater say in the decisions impacting their daily lives by promoting democratic reforms and civic participation across a range of issues and sectors, with a focus on four areas:

- Improving elections and political processes to advance democratic practices and electoral systems.
- Developing civil society and reform advocacy to create greater public conversation, allowing democratic voices to be heard in the political process.
- Strengthening media to facilitate free, independent, and accurate news coverage.
- Promoting the rule of law to support accountable, effective government and judicial institutions.

Examples of MEPI governance projects include voter education, independent media monitoring, journalist investigative skills training, newspaper business management training, election monitoring, political campaign training, youth leadership development, and promotion of legal reform and judicial independence.

SUPPORTING QUALITY EDUCATION

When young people receive a quality education, they have a strong foundation upon which to become active and engaged members of all aspects of social, political, and economic life. MEPI projects support educational reforms that enable more students to acquire the skills they need to compete in today’s changing social, political, and economic arenas — and to improve the quality of their lives and their families’ lives. MEPI concentrates on three education goals:

- Expanding access to education, especially for girls and women.
- Improving the quality of education.
- Focusing on the development of skills that lead to jobs and opportunity.

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MEPI education projects include those that support youth leadership skills development, youth civic education and involvement, teacher training, curriculum improvements, and technology skills development.



DEVELOPING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

MEPI economic programming is focused on region-wide economic and employment growth driven by private sector expansion and entrepreneurship, providing the kind of economic opportunity that creates more stable, prosperous communities. MEPI works closely with regional stakeholders on economic projects focused on the following goals:

- Encouraging trade with and investment in business, particularly small- and medium-sized businesses.
- Promoting entrepreneurship that creates new private sector jobs.
- Improving legal and regulatory transparency to enhance countries' global competitiveness.

Examples of MEPI's collaborations with people in the region include entrepreneur training exchange projects, technical assistance in support of free trade agreements, promotion of international labor standards, and reform of banking regulations and lending processes to encourage business growth.

"...no democracy can exist without women's full participation; no economy can be truly a free market without women involved."

—Secretary Clinton, February 20, 2009

EMPOWERING WOMEN

Women face many unique challenges that require specialized solutions – whether in dealing with legal issues surrounding family laws, access to political systems and elections, or economic barriers that limit independence. Women must be empowered, both individually and collectively, in order to

sustain progress in broadening civic engagement, opening economic systems, and closing education deficits. Since its inception, MEPI has invested more than half of its funding in projects with a focus on advancing MENA women's participation in political processes, providing access to educational opportunities, and increasing the role and profile of women in the private sector and public office region-wide. The sustained development and prosperity of the MENA region is dependent on women's full and equal participation in the economic, social, and political sectors of society.

INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH

Young people seek a wide range of opportunities to participate in the political and economic development of their countries. MEPI is committed to empowering youth through projects that help young people become actively engaged citizens, obtain a quality education, gain employable skills, and access professional development opportunities.

Civic education projects and training in leadership and advocacy skills empower youth to be advocates on behalf of their communities and to undertake civic duties and responsibilities. Professional development and education-for-employment projects support the integration of young people as contributing members to their economies. Media projects allow young people to harness their creativity and develop new media opportunities, such as blogs and podcasts. All of these projects support young people as stakeholders in society and encourage their active participation in their communities.



For more information, visit MEPI at www.mepi.state.gov and our regional offices in Abu Dhabi and Tunis at www.abudhabi.mepi.state.gov and www.medregion.mepi.state.gov.