

# MEPI Alumni Connection

## رابطة خريجي ميبي



### 2020 MEPI Alumni Survey

### Iraq Report



## **Acknowledgments**

The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Alumni Connection develops an active alumni network that fosters long-lasting relationships and opportunities to stimulate social and business entrepreneurship in the MENA region. The MEPI Alumni Connection supports community leaders from across the Middle East and North Africa to strengthen their networks, collaborate on leadership initiatives, and develop their skills in order to contribute to their communities.

IREX would like to acknowledge the contributions of MEPI alumni who took the time to respond thoughtfully to the biennial survey and share their experiences. Data collection outreach was conducted by the program team and supported by MEPI staff and partners. Hallie Davis conducted analysis and drafted this document with support from the MEPI Alumni Connection team.

This assessment is made possible through the MEPI Alumni Connection, a program of the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) of the U.S. Department of State (DoS) and implemented by IREX. The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Government.

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# 2020 MEPI Alumni Survey: Iraq

MEPI Alumni Connection

رابطة خريجي ميبى



## Respondent Profile



**25 respondents**  
from 2006 to 2019 (program completion years)



### Age

20-29 years 36%  
30+ 64%

### Gender

Female 20% Male 80%

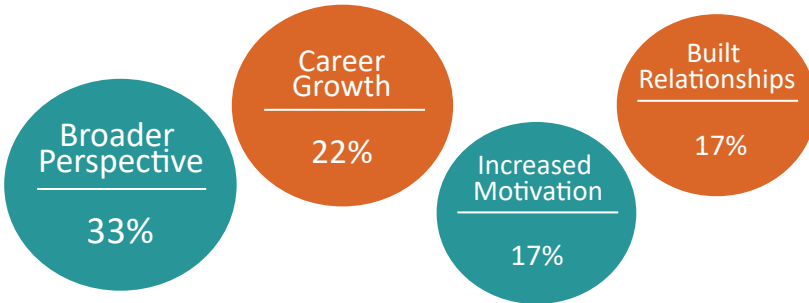


### MEPI Program

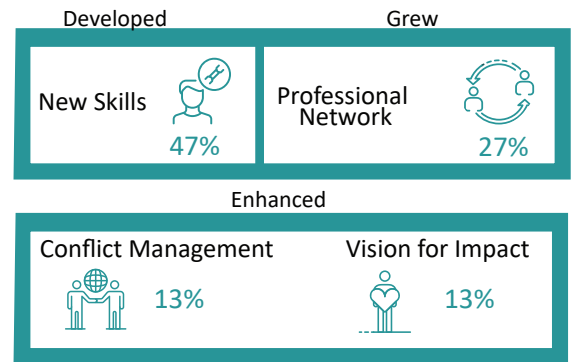
68% Leadership Development Fellowship  
24% Student Leaders Program  
4% Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship Program  
4% Civic Education and Leadership Fellowship

## Impact of MEPI

How was MEPI a life-changing experience?



How MEPI has helped develop alumni's ability to make an impact in their communities.



## Alumni Impact

### Employment

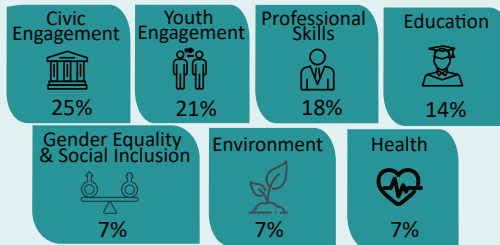
Employment rate of respondents

**88%** of respondents are currently working.



### Community Projects

Type of community project conducted



**65%** of respondents conducted at least one community project within the past two years.

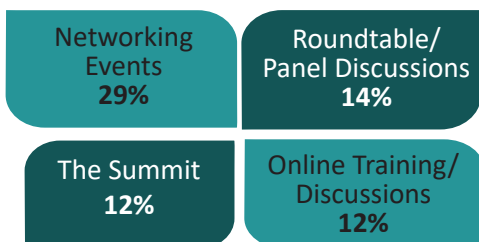
### Leadership

**71%** of respondents have served in a leadership role in the past year.

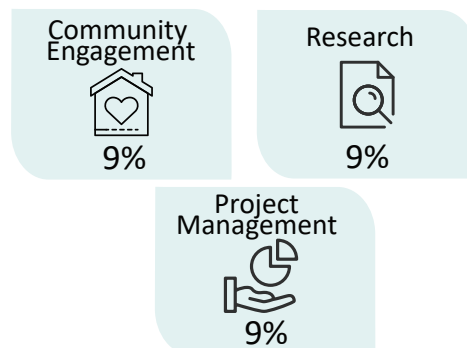


## MEPI Alumni Interests

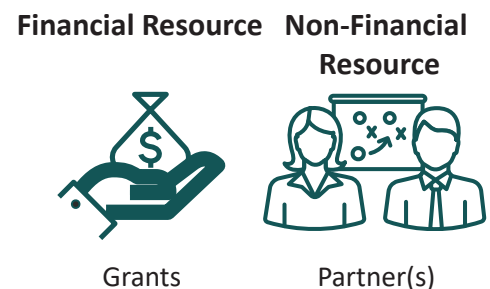
### Desired Activities



### Top Three Skills Respondents Would Like to Develop



### Most helpful



## I. Introduction and Background

For nearly two decades, the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) has fostered partnerships between citizens, civil society, the private sector, and governments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to resolve local challenges and promote shared interests in the areas of participatory governance and economic opportunity and reform. The MEPI Alumni Connection aims to further strengthen and sustain a network of approximately 1,500 graduates of MEPI leadership programs, including the Student Leaders Program, the Tomorrow's Leaders Program, and the Leadership Development Fellowship (LDF) (previously the Leaders for Democracy Fellowship). The MEPI Alumni Connection engages with alumni by offering a variety of activities to promote community and business leadership and enhance professional development opportunities. Alumni from across the MENA region in Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen are included in the MEPI Alumni Connection.

This report presents and analyzes the 2020 MEPI alumni survey results of respondents from Iraq.

## II. Methodology and Limitations

In 2020, the MEPI Alumni Connection team surveyed alumni of MEPI leadership programs to better understand the backgrounds and needs of these alumni, the impact of MEPI leadership programming in MENA, and assess mid-line results of the MEPI Alumni Connection. The survey is conducted biennially, and an initial needs assessment was conducted in 2018.

In July-September 2020, an online survey with up to 64 questions, provided in English and Arabic, was distributed to MEPI leadership alumni who had contact information in the MEPI Alumni Connection database and completed their program in 2003-2020. The questions were designed to learn more about engaging the MEPI alumni; the impact of MEPI programming on alumni professional, personal, and community leadership development; and the reach of MEPI programming and alumni in MENA.

Responses were collected using Survey Monkey. The survey was distributed initially to a representative group, 20% of alumni, to test its effectiveness over the course of a week. The order of questions was subsequently adjusted, and fewer questions became required to encourage survey completion and response rate. The survey was then distributed to the remaining 80% of alumni. Alumni who had not completed the survey received approximately weekly reminders via SurveyMonkey. Alumni were encouraged to complete the survey by IREX, MEPI, U.S. Embassies, and other MEPI leadership program stakeholders via program platforms and activities. Additionally, team members called a selection of alumni from diverse programs and countries who had not responded to the survey to encourage them. Alumni who completed the survey were eligible to be randomly selected for a professional development honorarium.

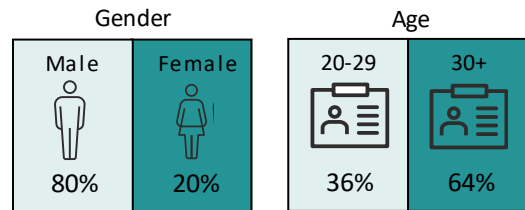
The survey was closed in September 2020 with a response rate of 30% (504/1663). Duplicates and any response from individuals not eligible for the MEPI Alumni Connection were removed for a total sample of 408 eligible responses. For analysis and reporting, the open-ended answers in Arabic were translated into English. The results were analyzed through quantitative data analysis and qualitative coding. The data has been disaggregated and further analyzed by gender, citizenship, age, and MEPI program and program completion year, where relevant. Due to the lengthy nature of the survey, the response rates

for many of the questions were uneven and low. Therefore, all percentages utilized in this report are calculated as a percentage (%) of total respondents for each corresponding question. Responses included in this report represent 27% (25/92) of all eligible alumni from Iraq who had contact information available at the time of the survey.

### III. Results

#### A. Respondent Profile

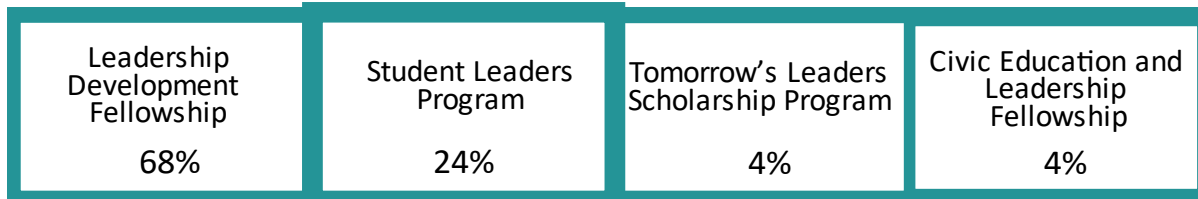
The survey includes 25 alumni respondents whose citizenship is from Iraq, making up approximately 6% (25/408) of the total sample of alumni respondents across all participating countries and programs. There is a higher representation of males, 80% (20/25), than females, 20% (5/25). Additionally, respondents were more likely to be older; 36% (9/25) were 20-29 years old and 64% (16/25) were 30 years old or older.



Note: Data based on 25 responses.

Across MEPI leadership programs, 68% (17/25) of respondents were alumni of the Leadership Development Fellowship and 24% (6/25) were alumni of the Student Leaders Program. Additionally, one respondent (4%) was an alumnus of the Tomorrow’s Leaders Scholarship Program and one (4%) from the Civic Education and Leadership Fellowship.

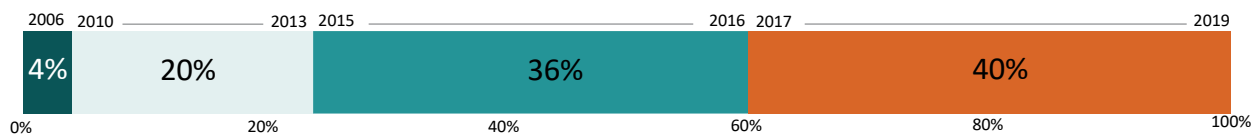
#### MEPI Program



Note: Data based on 25 responses.

Respondents’ program completion year ranges from 2006 – 2019, with no respondents from 2007-2009, 2012, or 2014. There was one respondent who completed their program in 2006, 4% (1/25). An additional 20% (5/25) of respondents completed their program in 2010-2013 and 36% (6/25) in 2015-2016. The remaining 40% (10/25) of respondents completed their program in 2017-2019.

#### Percentage of Alumni Respondents by MEPI Program Completion



Note: Data based on 25 respondents.

Findings also show that most of the respondents' current or primary country of residence is Iraq, 90% (19/21), with a few respondents residing elsewhere, 10% (2/21). Among the two respondents who noted their current or primary country of residence was outside of Iraq, one said they resided in Canada and the other split their time between Iraq and the United States.

## **B. Impact of MEPI**

Survey results show that respondents' participation in their MEPI program had a significant impact on their lives. It helped broaden their perspective, grow their career opportunities, and increase their motivation to impact their communities positively. Additionally, MEPI helped them build relationships with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Respondents also felt that MEPI enhanced their ability to impact their communities by developing new skills, including leadership and critical thinking skills. It also helped them grow their professional network, improve their ability to manage conflict effectively, and create a vision for impact.

In turn, alumni respondents have had an impact in their careers and entrepreneurial activities, in their communities, and as leaders. Respondents work across a variety of industries and have started businesses and organizations. Additionally, respondents have been able to apply the skills they gained from MEPI in their current positions. In their communities, respondents have been active, conducting projects mainly focused on civic engagement, youth engagement, and professional skills. Despite facing challenges, such as those brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, respondents have experienced success in their projects. Respondents' impact also extends to serving in leadership roles and demonstrating leadership through empowering youth and positively influencing others.

### **MEPI Impact on Alumni**

MEPI was a positive and transformative experience for respondents. They reported that participation in their MEPI leadership program changed their lives and enabled them to impact their communities significantly.

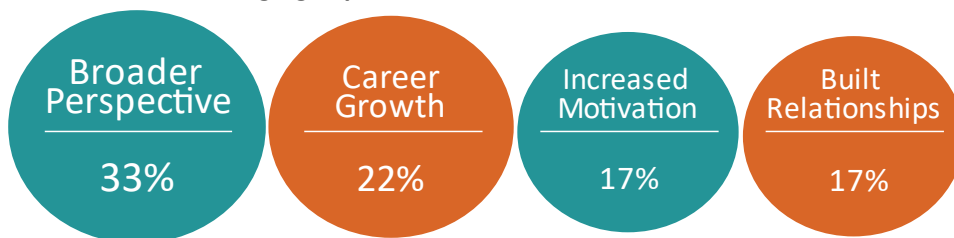
Respondents were asked if MEPI was a life-changing experience and, if so, how MEPI had changed their lives. Respondents noted that MEPI provided them with a broader perspective, enhanced their career growth, increased their motivation to make an impact, and helped them build new relationships. Among 19 respondents, one respondent noted that while MEPI "undoubtedly... [had] a great impact...I cannot yet say that [my] MEPI experience changed my life." However, the remaining 18 respondents agreed that MEPI did transform their lives.

Of these 18 respondents, 33% (6/18) said MEPI gave them a broader and global perspective. One respondent said, "for me, MEPI's experience coincided with my rich personal experience in Iraq and later in the United States, enabling me to see the development reality with a much broader viewpoint...as well as with the global movement...I [am] working within a global vision rather than a local one." Another respondent mentioned, "MEPI's experience was unique...because through it I was able to learn about the experiences of others in their communities." Others noted that MEPI "[widened] horizons of ideas and energy," provided "a better outlook," and "taught...about independence and the experience of staying outside the country for more than a month." Another 22% (4/18) of respondents



said that MEPI enhanced their careers and enabled them to grow professionally. One respondent said, “I wouldn't be where I am today in my career without my participation, to say the least.”

### How was MEPI was a life-changing experience?



Note: Data based on 18 responses to the open-ended question, “Many alumni say that MEPI was a life-changing experience. How, if at all, did MEPI change your life?” Percentages exclude responses that only confirmed the question and did not provide an explanation.

Additionally, 17% (3/18) of respondents said MEPI increased their motivation to impact their communities. One respondent noted that MEPI “made us better leaders and influenced us to do more to our communities.” Another said, “it changed my life in terms of building new ideas and starting to implement them, and the level of ambition started to rise annually.”



“Yes, through MEPI, my CV is now full of trainings and workshops, my mind has changed broadly for ambitioning more exchange opportunities, and my wish [is] to be a prominent leader in my community to change the life of every child in my country for the best...After MEPI, I got a job because of this prestigious program respected by my employers and got promotions for it. I am happy and proud to be one of the MEPIs.”

The remaining respondents said MEPI was life-changing because it helped them build relationships with individuals from diverse backgrounds, 17% (3/18). One respondent noted, “MEPI holds [an] important place because of the continuous engagement between the graduates and the attachment that we still have with our assigned universities in [the] USA.” Another mentioned, “the program helped [me] to learn how other professional people are thinking and make relations with them in such a way that I learned how democracy and capacity building work in other middle east countries.”<sup>1</sup>

“I became greatly aware of the fact that an individual can serve their community and engage in the development of civic life. Personally, I employ this awareness through implementing small scale projects.”



In addition to being a transformative experience, respondents also stated that MEPI helped improve their ability to impact their communities. They noted that MEPI helped them develop new skills, grow their professional network, manage conflict, and enhance their vision for community impact.

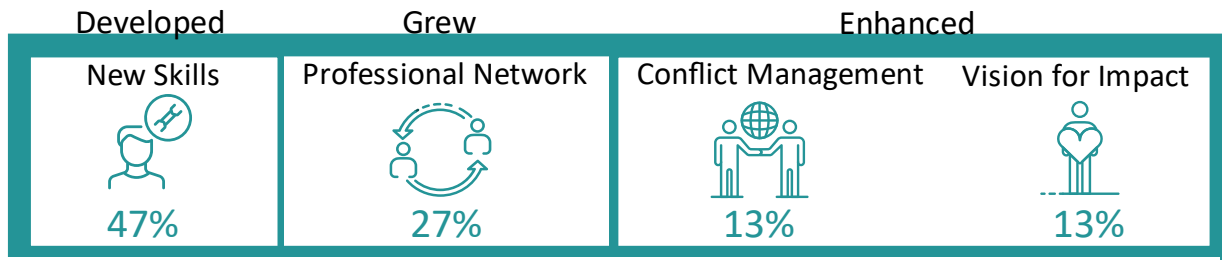
Of 15 respondents, 47% (7/15) said MEPI helped them develop skills useful for positively impacting their communities. Respondents noted MEPI “made us better leaders, helped us to communicate our goals and plans well” as well as “[learn] new subjective like M&E” and “leadership” skills. Another 27% (4/15)

<sup>1</sup> Percentages exclude two respondents that only confirmed the question and did not provide an explanation.



of respondents noted the enhanced network they had access to and the ability to “[get] to know a network of influencers and colleagues.” Additionally, 13% (2/15) of respondents said MEPI helped with conflict resolution and “resilience dealing with others.” The remaining 13% (2/15) mentioned a greater vision for impact and a “global view for...projects.”

### How MEPI has helped develop respondents’ ability to make an impact in their communities.



Note: Data based on 15 responses to the open-ended question, “How has MEPI helped you develop your ability to make an impact in your community?”



#### Developed New Skills

“Through the courses that took place...which developed many of my skills and concepts of life that I seek over time to invest in the impact on my community.”

“Gaining additional knowledge, adding critical thinking and self-reflection skills, as well as learning how to communicate effectively and the role of social media in influencing.”



#### Grew Professional Network

“By taking insight from the network work and enhancing my social capital in the Arab States.”



#### Enhanced Conflict Management

MEPI helped “[on] many levels, how to manage an entrepreneurial project. How to lead a team and especially how to manage and deal with conflicts. Actually, this last quality I’ve learned is helping me till now in my professional life.”



#### Enhanced Vision for Impact

“It gave me a clearer vision to know the needs of society.”

Note: Quotes are based on 15 responses to the open-ended question, “How has MEPI helped you develop your ability to make an impact in your community?”

## Alumni Impact

Alumni respondents have made an impact in their careers and entrepreneurial activities, their communities, and as leaders. Additionally, they have been able to use their experiences from MEPI to impact their communities further.

### Employment and Entrepreneurship

At the time the survey was conducted, 88% (22/25) of respondents said they were currently working with paid employment. Among males, the employment rate was 90% (18/20), while among females, it was 80% (4/5). Among MEPI

Employment rate of respondents

88% of respondents are currently working.



Note: Data based on 25 respondents to the question, “Are you currently working? (Only select yes if you have paid employment)”

programs, the employment rate was 88% (15/17) for respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship and 83% (5/6) for those from the Student Leaders Program. In addition, the two respondents from the Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship Program and the Civic Education and Leadership Fellowship both said they were currently working.

Of 21 employed respondents, who provided their position level, 5% (1/21) said they held an entry-level position, 43% (9/21) a mid-level position, 33% (7/21) an executive-level position, and 19% (4/21) were self-employed or owned a business. Older respondents were more likely to hold executive-level positions and be self-employed. Among younger respondents, 25% (2/8) held executive-level positions and 12.5% (1/8) were self-employed. Comparatively, 38% (5/13) of older respondents held executive-level positions and 23% (3/13) were self-employed.

Across all levels, respondents reported working across a variety of industries, organizations, and businesses. Of 19 employed respondents, 32% (6/19) reported working in the national government and 21% (4/19) for a large business with more than 200 employees. Additionally, 16% (3/19) reported working for an international non-government organization (NGO), 16% (3/19) for a local NGO, and 11% (2/19) for the local government. The remaining 5% (1/19) reported working for a medium-sized business with 50 – 200 employees.



**50%** of respondents started their own business or organization after their experience with MEPI.



While a smaller percentage of respondents reported they were self-employed or owned a business, 50% (12/24) stated they had started their own business or organization after their experience with MEPI. This discrepancy in responses may be because of several reasons, including respondents may have started a business in the past but are no longer business owners or they do not rely on income from their business and therefore do not consider themselves self-employed. Additionally, they may have started an organization and do not consider themselves to be a business owner. Among those who started a business/organization, 36% (4/11) said they had support from a partner they met through their MEPI program or the alumni network. This result indicates that respondents' participation in their MEPI program and the alumni network has enhanced opportunities for entrepreneurial activities.



"I implement the leadership techniques and project management, in addition to communication, public speaking and presentation skills that I polished at my MEPI training to be more productive at my work."

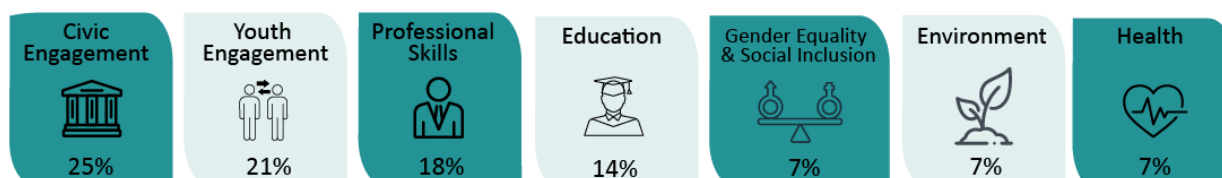
MEPI also helped respondents gain applicable job skills. Respondents noted they had used skills in decision-making, leadership, and project management in their current positions. One respondent said, "MEPI was important pillar in my experience...that helps to deal with decision-making." Another noted they are using what they learned through MEPI "by producing content and investing in communication, marketing, and management skills." While another respondent mentioned, they are "employing the knowledge and skills that have been acquired, such as effective planning and leadership, good communication, and setting goals within a certain time frame."

## Community Projects

The majority of respondents have been active in their communities, as 65% (15/23) have conducted at least one community project within the past two years. Males were more likely to conduct a project, 78% (14/18), compared to females, 20% (1/5). Additionally, respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship, 67% (10/15), and the Student Leaders Program, 67% (4/6), conducted projects at a similar rate.

Among respondents who conducted a community project, 14 provided information as to the type of project. The most common type focused on civic engagement, 25%, followed by youth engagement, 21%, and professional skills, 18%. An additional 14% of respondents conducted projects focused on education and 7% on gender equality and social inclusion. There was also 7% of respondents who focused on environmental projects and 7% on health.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, many respondents conducted more than one type of project, as 57% (8/14) conducted at least two types.

### Type of Community Project Conducted



Note: Data based on 14 responses to the question “What type of project did you conduct?” Respondents could select multiple options.

Among respondents who conducted at least one community project, 12 estimated how many people they believe benefited from their projects. According to responses, more than 20,000 individuals were positively impacted by respondents’ community projects. One respondent claimed that their project(s) impacted 10,000 individuals. The remaining 11 respondents had an average of around 900 beneficiaries each.

The impact of community projects can be further understood through respondents’ accounts of their greatest success or result. Respondents noted their projects had an impact on youth and civic awareness. Additionally, respondents worked to help mitigate the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. One respondent noted they “[increased the] number of youth and women in leadership in political parties” and “[established] a policy unit in two different political parties that encourage...inclusion.” Another respondent noted, “the project was...to familiarize young people with the UN Resolution 2250, and the goal was to train 100 young people, and the goal was achieved.” Other respondents worked to “[help] medical staff during [the] COVID-19 pandemic” and “[bridge] the community’s shortage in terms of the scarcity of the medical mask, as we worked to establish an operator that produces 25,000 medical masks.”

<sup>2</sup> Percentages are based on 14 responses in which multiple options could be selected.

“We used a campaign to combat harassment in conflict areas, and it was divided into two phases, the first being creating media content and the second being training for the legal protection of women, and then enabling them to conduct open sessions for women in various tense areas...In addition to holding open sessions for the whole community and in the presence of the police to hear from women the problems of electronic sexual blackmail....Our campaign also prompted the media to talk about the issue after the topic was a taboo.”



However, respondents also noted several challenges that have made starting and growing their projects difficult. The main challenges were funding, security, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents reported “lack of funding” and “financial obstacles” as challenges. Another noted the “security situation was the key challenge due to the situation in Iraq.” Others mentioned difficulties because of the pandemic. One respondent said, “the conditions that Iraq witnessed, such as the demonstrations and then the closure due to the pandemic, had the greatest impact.” Another mentioned, “there is no doubt that the Corona pandemic was one of the biggest obstacles.”

Despite challenges, many respondents have been able to impact their communities and experience success in their projects. This ability has been strengthened by their participation in their MEPI program and the MEPI Alumni Connection. The majority of respondents, 57% (8/14), who conducted a community project collaborated with someone they met through the alumni network or their MEPI program. This result indicates that the MEPI program and the alumni network have been beneficial in fostering partnerships and collaborations among respondents.



57% of respondents who conducted a community project collaborated with someone they met through the alumni network or their MEPI program.

## Leadership

Respondents have also impacted their communities by serving in leadership roles. Of 21 respondents, 71% (15/21) have served in a leadership role within the past year. Across gender, 75% (12/16) of males and 60% (3/5) of females have served in leadership. There are also differences across respondents’ age. Among younger respondents, 75% (6/8) have served in a leadership role, compared to 69% (9/13) of older respondents. Additionally, 79% (11/14) of respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship and 40% (2/5) from the Student Leaders Program have served.

Among respondents who served in leadership, 50% were in a professional setting, 38% in a community setting, and 13% in an academic setting.<sup>3</sup> A professional setting was the most common type of leadership role across all respondent ages and MEPI program.

<sup>3</sup> Percentages based on 15 respondents who served in a leadership setting and could select multiple options.



Note: Percentages for type of leadership roles are based on 15 respondents who could select multiple options.

Beyond serving in a formal leadership role, respondents have also demonstrated leadership in their communities and workplaces. When asked how they have used their leadership skills to help people, respondents noted they had empowered youth and girls and positively influenced others. One respondent noted they are a “consultant for youth economic empowerment...to train and advise youth to open their own initiatives in the private sector.” Others have “worked to provide educational opportunities for girls in conflict areas and displacement camps” and “[trained] and [reached] the doors of disadvantaged women.” Another respondent was able to use the influence of social media, noting “Facebook was the most important space for influence and change, my official page on Facebook includes more than 60,000 subscribers and I do it on a daily basis by discussing events.”



“By virtue of my work as a journalist and trainer, I always try to impart positive skills, information and values to young people from my community, and help them as much as possible in gaining knowledge and awareness and strengthening their critical thinking.”

## C. Impact of the MEPI Alumni Connection

The MEPI Alumni Connection offers numerous activities for alumni to grow their network and develop new professional skills. Many respondents have participated in these activities within the past two years. Among them, webinars and the Summit were the activities with the highest participation.

Respondents’ engagement with the MEPI Alumni Connection has led to numerous positive outcomes. They have built new relationships and collaborated with other MEPI alumni on projects, initiatives, and business ideas. Additionally, respondents have conducted numerous events and activities to promote specific issues and awareness. Support received from the MEPI Alumni Connection, such as the Alumni Venture Fund, has further enabled respondents to implement community projects. Moreover, the MEPI Alumni Connection likely has a broader impact on communities as many respondents have shared what they learned from alumni activities with colleagues and family.

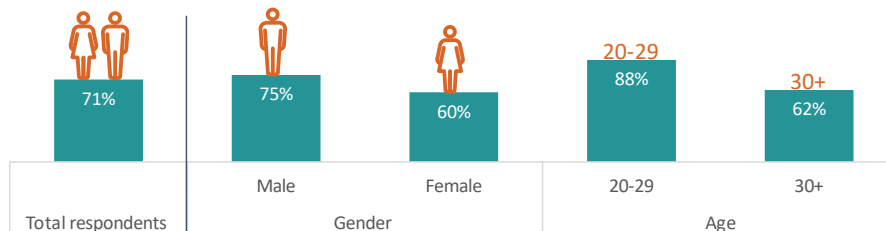
### Alumni engagement

#### Professional Development Activities

Of 21 respondents, 71% (15/21) participated in networking or professional development opportunities through the MEPI Alumni Connection within the past two years. The participation rate among males is

75% (12/15), which is higher than females, who have a participation rate of 60% (3/5). Additionally, participation is higher among younger respondents; 88% (7/8) of younger respondents participated in activities compared to 62% (8/13) of older respondents.

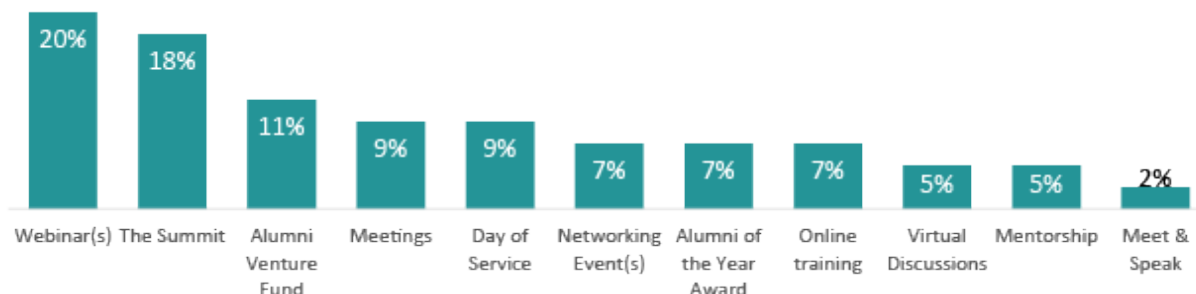
### Participation in networking/professional development opportunities



Note: Data based on 15 respondents who indicated that they had participated in a networking or professional development opportunity through the MEPI Alumni Connection during the past two years.

The MEPI Alumni Connection offers numerous types of networking and professional development opportunities to appeal to diverse alumni including, webinars, the Summit, the Alumni Venture Fund, meetings, MEPI Day of Service, networking events, the Alumni of the Year Award, online training, virtual discussions, mentorship, and opportunities to meet and speak.

### Participation by type of networking or professional development opportunity



Note: Data based on 15 respondents who indicated that they had participated in a networking or professional development opportunity through the MEPI Alumni Connection during the past two years. Respondents could select all options that apply.

Over the last two years, the activity with the highest participation was webinars, as 20% of respondents participated. The next most highly participated activities were the Summit (18%), the Alumni Venture Fund (11%), meetings (9%), and the MEPI Day of Service (9%).<sup>4</sup> Webinars (20%) and the Summit (20%) had the highest participation among males, while webinars (22%) and the Alumni of the Year Award (22%) had the highest participation among females.<sup>5</sup>

### Impact of Alumni Engagement



The MEPI Alumni Connection has helped alumni build relationships with new alumni and one another. As a result of participation in a MEPI Alumni Connection activity, 85% (17/20) of respondents have built relationships with new alumni. Additionally, 65% (13/20) of respondents have built relationships with at

<sup>4</sup> Percentages are based on responses from 15 respondents who participated in networking/professional development opportunities and where multiple options could be selected.

<sup>5</sup> Percentages are based on responses from 12 male and 3 female respondents.

least six new alumni, indicating that alumni activities help foster numerous relationships. The MEPI Alumni Connection has also helped enhance collaborations.

In the past two years, 38% (8/21) of respondents have collaborated with at least one other alumni from MEPI or the Department of State on a project, initiative, or business idea. Among younger respondents, 25% (2/8) have collaborated with other alumni, while 46% (6/13) of older respondents have. Across MEPI programs, 43% (6/14) of respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship and 20% (1/5) from the Student Leaders Program have collaborated. Additionally, respondents have collaborated with civil society organizations to conduct events that promote specific issues and awareness. In the past two years, 140 events and activities were led by 18 respondents. While one respondent led 50 events, the majority, 83% (15/18), conducted an average of four events each. Of the total 140 events that were conducted, 19% were conducted by seven younger respondents and 81% by 11 older respondents.

 **140** events and activities were led by **18** respondents. 

Beyond helping develop relationships and collaborations, the MEPI Alumni Connection has also helped respondents conduct and expand community projects through offering opportunities and support. This support includes the Alumni Venture Fund, the MEPI Day of Service, training/resources, and partnerships with MEPI alumni. Among respondents who conducted a community project, 29% (4/14) report receiving at least one form of support. All four respondents who received support indicated it was through the Alumni Venture Fund. Additionally, two respondents indicated receiving multiple forms of support. One respondent also indicated receiving support through the MEPI Day of Service and another mentioned it was through training/resources and partnerships with MEPI alumni.

The MEPI Alumni Connection likely has a broader influence beyond its direct impact on helping respondents develop new partnerships and conduct events and projects. Of 21 respondents, 100% said they have shared what they learned through a MEPI alumni activity (event, training, partnership, etc.) with others. Among these respondents, 20% have done so with colleagues, 20% on a social media page, 16% in-person, 16% with family, 10% online, 7% with other MEPI alumni, 7% in a publication, and 3% with other DoS alumni.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, MEPI alumni activities likely benefit alumni and their colleagues, friends, and family.

## D. MEPI Alumni Interests

Overall, respondents feel comfortable and secure participating in MEPI Alumni Connection activities. Additionally, respondents agreed that the resources provided by the MEPI Alumni Connection are appropriate.

Respondents expressed their interests and preferences for different activities and opportunities they would like. Respondents indicated that networking events, including networking events with professionals and diplomats, and roundtable/panel discussions were the type of activities they would most like to see implemented through the MEPI Alumni Connection. Regarding the format of events and training, respondents would most prefer online events during evening hours and 2-4-day intensive

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<sup>6</sup> Percentages are based on 21 responses in which multiple options could be selected.



training. Additionally, respondents noted that they would like to develop skills in community engagement, project management, and research. In terms of support, respondents indicated that the most helpful form of financial support would be through a grant. Additionally, having a partner or partners would be the most beneficial form of non-financial support.

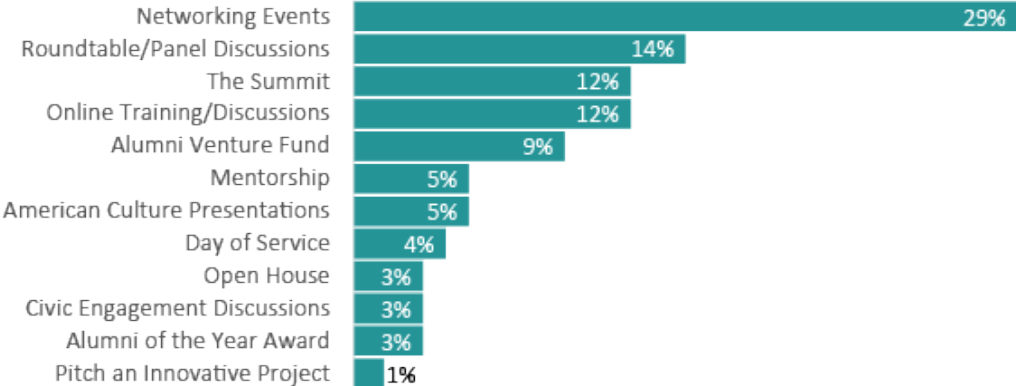
**Alumni Needs**

The majority of respondents, 84% (16/19), agreed that the MEPI Alumni Connection provides appropriate and relevant resources to their current professional or academic level. Additionally, respondents were asked if they felt secure and comfortable when participating in MEPI Alumni Connection activities. Among 18 respondents, 72% reported that they always felt secure and 28% often felt secure. This result indicates that, overall, most respondents feel secure and comfortable participating in alumni activities.

**Opportunities to Further Strengthen and Grow the MEPI Alumni Connection**

There are several opportunities for the MEPI Alumni Connection to continue supporting alumni and meeting their needs. The survey included questions to understand respondents’ interests in activities and opportunities with the MEPI Alumni Connection. Question topics included activities alumni would like to see implemented, preferences for format of events, skills they would like to develop, as well as useful financial and non-financial support they would like to receive.

**Respondents’ Desired Activities**



Respondents stated that the activities they would most like to see implemented were networking events (29%), such as networking events with diplomats and professionals. The next most desired activities were roundtable/panel discussions (14%), the Summit (12%), and online events (12%), including online training, webinars, and virtual discussions. Other activities included the Alumni Venture Fund (9%), mentorships (5%), and American culture presentations (5%).<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, the most common responses regarding the format of events/training were online events during evening hours (20%) and 2-4-day intensive training (20%). Additional responses included in-person training during weekends (17%), online events during weekends (15%), and up to 1-day training

<sup>7</sup> Data is based on 24 responses in which multiple options could be selected.

(12%). The least preferred formats were in-person training during work hours (7%), in-person training during evening hours (7%), and online events during work hours (3%).<sup>8</sup>

### Top three skills respondents would like to develop.



Note: Data based on 25 respondents in which multiple options could be selected.

Respondents were also asked to select three skills they would like to develop to advance their community and professional leadership. Among all respondents, the skills most preferred were community engagement (9%), project management (9%), and research (9%). Males indicated similar preferences for skills. However, the skills most preferred among females were renewable energy/environmental issues (20%) and media literacy (13%). There were also differences in preferred skills across MEPI programs. Among respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship, the skills most desired were project management (10%) and research (10%). Additionally, NGO management (17%) was the skill most desired among respondents from the Student Leaders Program.

In addition to activities and skills, respondents were asked what financial and non-financial resources would be most beneficial in helping them feel prepared to improve or launch new projects. Regarding financial resources, 25 respondents indicated grants would be most helpful (38%), followed by investments (24%) and donations (14%). Instead of choosing a specific resource, 10% of respondents said that no financial resources were needed and 7% said that all financial resources would be helpful (i.e., grant, investment, donation, and loan). Additionally, 7% of respondents indicated a loan.<sup>9</sup>

Respondents indicated that the most beneficial non-financial resource would be having a partner or partners (27%). Other non-financial resources included access to in-person training (21%), access to alumni or professionals with relevant experience (19%), a professional mentor (17%), and online training (15%).

## IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

MEPI has significantly impacted respondents' lives and enhanced their ability to make an impact in their communities. MEPI has helped transform respondents' lives by broadening their perspectives, providing opportunities for career growth, and increasing their motivation for community impact. Additionally, respondents noted that MEPI enabled them to build personal and professional relationships. Moreover, it has improved respondents' ability to make an impact in their communities. Respondents felt their ability to positively impact their community was enhanced because they developed new skills, such as leadership skills. It also helped respondents access a greater professional network as well as improve their ability to manage conflict and have a clearer vision for impact.

<sup>8</sup> Data is based on 25 total respondents who could select multiple options.

<sup>9</sup> Data for financial and non-financial resources is based on 25 respondents who could select multiple options.

Alumni respondents have been able to use their MEPI experience to have an impact in their careers and entrepreneurial activities, in their communities, and as leaders. Many respondents are working in various industries and have started businesses and organizations. Respondents have also conducted community projects to improve civic engagement, encourage youth, and aid during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, respondents have impacted their communities by serving in leadership roles and positively influencing others in their communities.

Participation in the MEPI Alumni Connection has also been highly impactful for respondents as it provides numerous opportunities for them to grow their network and develop new professional skills. The majority of respondents have participated in these opportunities and activities, with participation highest in webinars and the Summit. Respondents' engagement and participation in these activities have led to many beneficial outcomes, including new relationships and collaborations. Respondents have collaborated with other MEPI alumni and civil society organizations. Moreover, respondents have received support for their community projects through the Alumni Venture Fund.

There are also opportunities for the MEPI Alumni Connection to strengthen alumni relations and provide further support. Respondents indicated that they would like the opportunity to participate in additional networking events and roundtable/panel discussions. The format of events most preferred by respondents were online events during evening hours and 2-4-day intensive training. Additionally, respondents would like to develop skills in community engagement, project management, and research. To further support alumni's ability to improve or launch new projects, respondents said grants would be the most beneficial financial resource and having a partner(s), the most beneficial non-financial resource.

This assessment is made possible through the MEPI Alumni Connection, a program of the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) of the U.S. Department of State and implemented by IREX.

<https://www.irex.org/project/mepi-alumni-connection>