

MEPI Alumni Connection

رابطة خريجي ميبي



2020 MEPI Alumni Survey

Yemen 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.

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2020 MEPI Alumni Survey: Yemen

MEPI Alumni Connection

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Respondent Profile

30 respondents
from 2008 to 2020 (program completion years)



Age

20-29 years 58%
30+ 42%

Gender

Female 43% Male 53% Prefer not to answer 3%

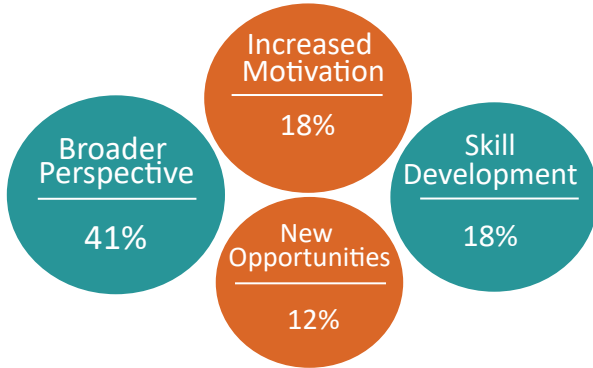


MEPI Program

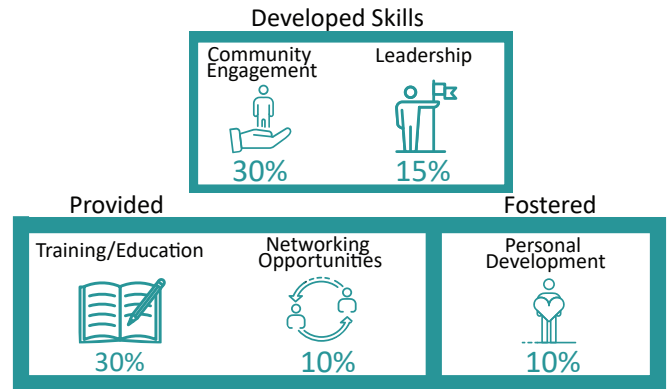
33% Leadership Development Fellowship
33% Student Leaders Program
30% Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship Program
3% Civic Education and Leadership Fellowship

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

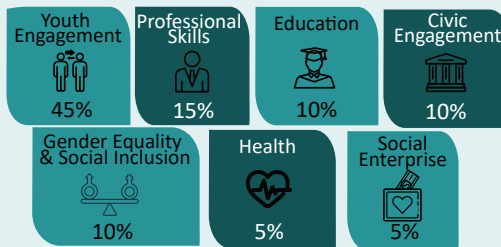
Employment

77% of respondents are currently working.



Community Projects

Type of community project conducted



52% of respondents conducted at least one community project within the past two years.

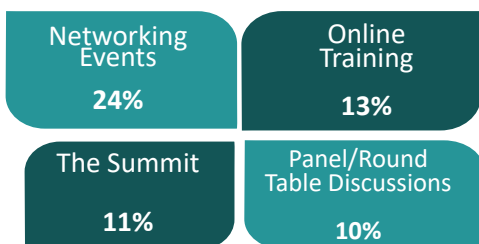
Leadership

50% of respondents have served in a leadership role in the past year.



MEPI Alumni Interests

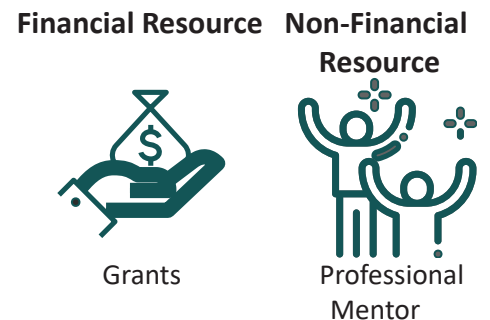
Desired Activities



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 Yemen.

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.

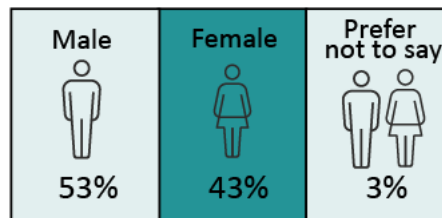
The survey was closed in September 2020 with a response rate of 30% (504/1663). Duplicates and any response from individuals not eligible for the MEPI Alumni Connection were removed for a total sample of 408 eligible responses. For analysis and reporting, the open-ended answers in Arabic were translated 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% (30/111) of all eligible alumni from Yemen who had contact information available at the time of the survey.

III. Results

A. Respondent Profile

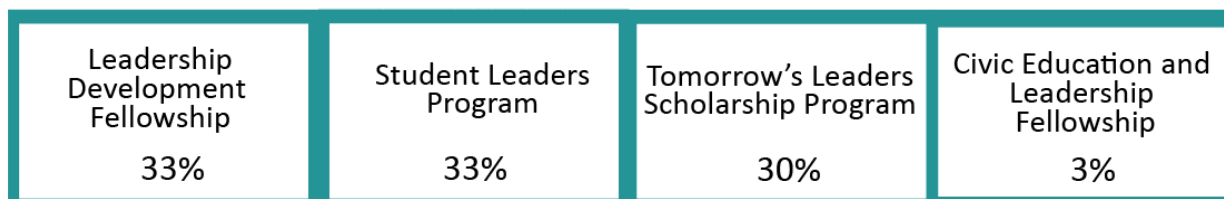
The survey includes 30 alumni respondents whose citizenship is from Yemen, making up approximately 7% (30/408) of the total sample of alumni respondents across all participating countries and programs. Among respondents from Yemen, there was a higher representation of males, 53% (16/30), compared to females, 43% (13/30). There was also one respondent who preferred not to indicate their gender, 3% (1/30). Additionally, respondents were more likely to be younger as 58% (15/26) were 20-29 years old, and 42% (11/26) were 30 years old or older.



Note: Data based on 30 respondents.

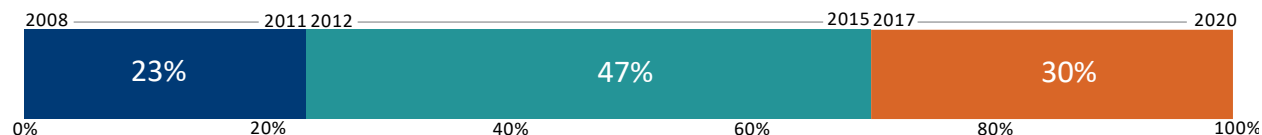
Across MEPI leadership programs, 33% (10/30) of respondents were alumni of the Leadership Development Fellowship, 33% (10/30) from the Student Leaders Program, and 30% (9/30) from the Tomorrow’s Leaders Scholarship Program. Additionally, one respondent was an alumnus of the Civic Education and Leadership Fellowship, 3% (1/30).

MEPI Program



Note: Data based on 30 respondents.

Respondents’ program completion year ranges from 2008 – 2020, with no respondents from 2016. About a quarter of respondents, 23% (7/30), completed their program in 2008-2011 and 47% (14/30) in 2012-2015. The remaining 30% (9/30) completed their program in 2017-2020. Additionally, the one respondent who completed their program in 2020 was from the Tomorrow’s Leaders Scholarship Program.



Note: Data based on 30 respondents.

Percentage of respondents by MEPI Program Completion Year

Findings also show that most of the respondents’ current or primary country of residence is Yemen, 54% (13/24); however, 46% (11/24) of respondents reside abroad. Among the 11 respondents who noted their

current or primary residence was outside of Yemen, three said they resided in Qatar and two in Germany. Additionally, one respondent resided in each of the following countries: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, and Scotland.

B. Impact of MEPI

Survey results show that respondents' participation in their MEPI program had a significant impact on their lives. It helped them gain a broader perspective, increase their motivation for community service, develop skills, and access new opportunities. Additionally, respondents felt that MEPI enhanced their ability to impact their communities positively. MEPI helped respondents develop new skills to engage their community better and serve as leaders. It has also provided training/education and greater professional networking opportunities. Finally, MEPI also fostered personal development among respondents.

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, hold executive-level positions, and have started businesses and organizations. Additionally, respondents have used skills gained from MEPI in their current positions. In their communities, respondents have been active, conducting projects mainly focused on youth engagement, professional skills, and education. These projects have experienced success despite difficult situations in the country. Respondents' impact also extends to serving in leadership roles and demonstrating leadership through mentorship and encouragement.

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 helped them gain a broader and more global perspective, increase their motivation to serve and impact their communities, and develop skills. Additionally, respondents noted that MEPI opened doors to new professional opportunities.

How was MEPI was a life-changing experience?



Note: Data based on 17 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.

Among 17 respondents, 41% (7/17) said MEPI was life-changing because it helped develop a broader perspective. One respondent noted, “MEPI changed my life by giving me the proper perspective and background to be an effective member of the society.” Another said, “the way I saw things... [MEPI] opened my mind to many topics, especially my community participation.” Others mentioned that MEPI changed their “whole perception of life, of American culture, of politics, of civic engagement, of charity work,” their “personal and professional way of thinking,” and “opened [their] perception towards the world.”

“Now, I have become stronger with the things that I have learned despite the disastrous security situation in my country and the technical difficulties that I need to communicate with colleagues or experiences, but the experience of running with other cultures has given me more room now in the ability to plan for myself well in life and what I am doing...My attitudes and beliefs have also changed with those who disagree with me, even with religion...It has really changed.”



Another 18% (3/7) of respondents noted that MEPI transformed their lives because it increased their motivation to serve and positively impact their communities. One respondent noted that MEPI helped them “[decide] to devote [their] life to community service.” Another respondent said that because of MEPI, they “became more...pioneering at the community level,” which resulted in “many initiatives that have had a positive impact on [the] community.”



“Before MEPI, I was only thinking about providing a limited community service for my area...but after I entered MEPI and went through the experience and got acquainted with many young people, I realized that the matter in providing services is not only my limited community, but it is me and expanding the culture to include the largest number of people...through which I will open wider areas for...my work and society.”

Additionally, 18% (3/7) of respondents said they developed new skills because of their participation in their MEPI program. One respondent said that MEPI “gave me the skills to grow,” and another mentioned that “it [widened] my knowledge.” The remaining 12% (2/17) of respondents noted that MEPI “opened many opportunities.” One respondent said MEPI “opened the way for me to participate in many local, regional and international events, and [become] an active presence at the community level.”¹

In addition to being a transformative experience, respondents also stated that MEPI helped improve their ability to impact their communities. It helped respondents develop skills to engage their communities better and serve as leaders. Additionally, it provided training/education and networking opportunities and fostered personal development. Of 20 respondents, 30% (6/20) said MEPI helped them develop community engagement skills, including “knowledge about the importance of community engagement in developing the communities” and “[becoming] able to mobilize the community in favor of their benefit.” Another 15% (3/20) of respondents also said the MEPI helped them develop skills; however, these respondents noted their growth in leadership skills, such as their improvement in “personal leadership and response to community problems.” Additionally, 30% (6/20) of respondents noted their ability to

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

positively impact their communities was enhanced because of the training and education they received from MEPI. One respondent noted that MEPI provided “conferences and continuous support.” The remaining respondents said MEPI provided networking opportunities, 10% (2/20), and fostered personal development, 10% (2/20).²

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



Note: Data based on 20 responses to the open-ended question, “How has MEPI helped you develop your ability to make an impact in your community?” Percentages exclude one respondent that only confirmed the question and did not provide an explanation.

 **Developed Skills: Community Engagement**

“It gave me the knowledge to recognize the problem and the strength to solve it, my community [has] many problems and thanks to MEPI I knew exactly how to approach those problems and which one’s that I can make a positive influence on; like feminism, education and problem solving under conflict.”

 **Developed Skills: Leadership**

“My participation in the [Leadership Development Fellowship]... represented an important turning point in my practical, scientific, and personal life. The fellowship also played a prominent role in acquiring and developing a lot of knowledge and leadership skills, raising my level of leadership sense and motivating me to play the leadership and directive role in adopting initiatives, planning, and implementing projects.”

 **Provided: Training/Education**

MEPI “[entitled]me to [an] excellent education and empowering environment.”

 **Provided: Networking Opportunities**

“Through implementing community-based projects and networking with various NGOs [and] Community Based Organizations through [alumni].”

 **Fostered: Personal Development**

MEPI “[improved my] skills and self-confidence.”

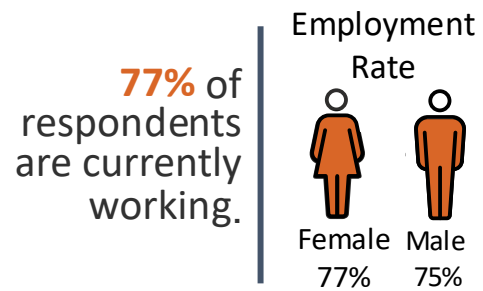
Alumni Impact

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.

² Percentages exclude one respondent that only confirmed the question and did not provide an explanation.

Employment and Entrepreneurship



At the time the survey was conducted, 77% (23/30) of respondents said they were currently working with paid employment. The employment rate was similar across gender; 75% (12/16) of males and 77% (10/13) of females said they were working. However, there are some differences across MEPI programs. Respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship had an employment rate of 80% (8/10), and 78% (7/9) was the rate among those from the Tomorrow's Leaders Program. Additionally, respondents from the Student Leaders Program had an employment rate of 70% (7/10).³



Note: Data based on 30 respondents to the question, "Are you currently working? (Only select yes if you have paid employment)"

Of 20 employed respondents who provided their position level, 35% (7/20) held an entry-level position, 15% (3/20) a mid-level position, 40% (8/20) an executive-level position, and 10% (2/20) were self-employed. Females and older respondents were more likely to hold executive-level positions. Half of the employed females, 50% (4/8), held executive-level positions compared to 36% (4/11) of males. Additionally, 62% (5/8) of older respondents were in executive-level positions compared to 25% (3/15) of younger respondents.

Among all levels, respondents reported working across a variety of industries, organizations, and businesses. Of 20 respondents, 30% (6/20) worked for a local non-government organization (NGO), 20% (4/20) for an international NGO, and 20% (4/20) for a large business. Additionally, 20% (4/20) of respondents worked for the local government and 10% (2/20) for the national government.

 **44% 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, 44% (12/27) stated they had started their own business or organization after their experience with MEPI. This discrepancy in responses may be because of several reasons. These reasons may include respondents started a business in the past but are no longer business owners or they may not rely on income from their business and therefore do not consider themselves to be self-employed. Additionally, respondents may have started an organization and do not consider themselves self-employed or business owners. Among respondents who started a business/organization, 25% (3/12) said they had a partner they had met either 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.

³ The one respondent who did not provide their gender and the one from the Civic Education and Leadership Fellowship were employed.

MEPI has also helped respondents be successful in their careers because they have been able to apply skills learned from MEPI in their current positions and projects. One respondent noted, “[I] apply everything I have learned through training and constant mentoring of my colleagues.” Another indicated that MEPI “had a great impact on raising my level of professionalism and knowledge, as it helped me a lot in getting acquainted with the mechanisms of civil work in Lebanese organizations, which enabled me to transfer that experience that I lived to the organizations and agencies that I worked and worked for.”



“I implement most of what I learned of [my] MEPI program in my work environment and in the implementation of my project activities...the project depends on community engagement and participatory action for community enhancement which mainly links with the objectives of [the] MEPI program in dealing with different stakeholders and [providing] transparency during all stages of the project.”

Community Projects

The majority of respondents have been active in their communities, as 52% (13/25) have conducted at least one community project within the past two years. Older respondents were slightly more likely to conduct community projects, 56% (5/9), compared to younger respondents, 50% (7/14). Additionally, females were more likely to conduct a project than males, 56% (5/9) compared to 47% (7/15). There were also differences across MEPI programs. Among respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship, 75% (6/8) conducted a project; this is higher than respondents from the Student Leaders Program, 56% (5/9), and those from the Tomorrow’s Leaders Program, 25% (2/8).

Type of Community Project Conducted



Note: Data based on 12 responses to the question “What type of project did you conduct?” Respondents could select multiple options.

Among respondents who conducted a community project, 12 provided information as to the type of project. The most common type focused on youth engagement, 45%, followed by professional skills, 15%. An additional 10% of respondents conducted projects on education, 10% on civic engagement, 10% on gender equality and social inclusion, 5% on health, and 5% on social enterprise.⁴ Youth engagement was the most common type of community project conducted by respondents of all ages, gender, and MEPI program. Additionally, half of the respondents, 50% (6/12), conducted more than one type of project.

Of respondents who conducted a community project, 12 estimated of how many people they believe benefited from their projects. According to these responses, more than 13,000 individuals were positively impacted by respondents’ community projects. One respondent estimated their project(s) to have

⁴ Percentages are based on 12 respondents who conducted community projects, multiple options could be selected.

benefited 10,000 individuals. However, the remaining 11 respondents estimated a smaller number of beneficiaries between 5 to 1500, with an average of 292 per respondent.



More than **13,000** individuals were positively impacted by respondents' community projects.

The impact of community projects can be further understood through respondents' accounts of their greatest success or result. One respondent said their project had experienced numerous successes, including "activating the role of youth in community service and the peace process in Yemen," "building the capabilities of youth and enabling them to play a more effective and influential role in the service of peace," "providing funding for five youth initiatives amounting to one million Yemeni riyals for each initiative," and "raising community awareness of the Corona epidemic and ways to prevent it." Other respondents noted the impact of the projects and youth and women empowerment and job opportunities. One respondent mentioned, "the project has helped many young people to access books for free and instill in them a love for books." Other respondents were able to "[simplify] some legal procedures for women's issues...by presenting them in a theatrical form" and work with "displaced women...to develop their skills and abilities." Another respondent noted, "we have managed to put Yemeni coffee back on the international market and managed to give jobs to Yemenis stranded in Egypt."



"I currently run a youth establishment that is considered one of the best emerging institutions in Yemen. MEPI supported me in the first project that helped me a lot to gain the trust of the donors, and also... [give] us a recommendation to an international organization, and we won the project...MEPI support means a lot to me."

However, respondents also noted a number of challenges that have made starting and growing their projects difficult. Some of these challenges included the security situation in Yemen and accessing financial resources. One respondent noted, "the security situation in the region is very tense, and there is a difficulty in obtaining permits to carry out activities from the authorities...we implemented the project in a conflict zone, which made us somewhat restricted in movement and media in order to preserve the safety of the team from any violations or arbitrary imprisonment." Another noted their main challenges were "the war, the absence of basic services for work such as the internet and electricity, the lack of a sense of safety...the lack of funds for youth organizations."

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. Half of the respondents, 54% (7/13), 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.

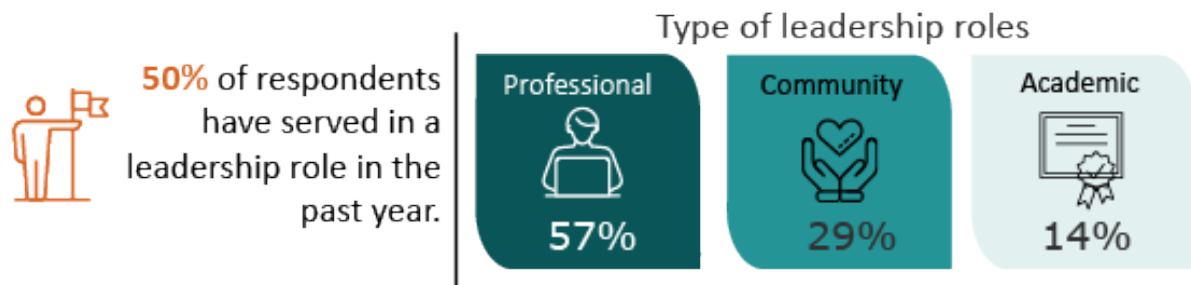


54% of respondents who conducted a community project collaborated with someone they met through the alumni network or their MEPI program.

Leadership

Respondents have also impacted their communities by serving in leadership roles. Of 24 respondents, 50% (12/24) have served in a leadership role within the past year. Females were slightly more likely to have served in a leadership position than males, 56% (5/9) compared to 43% (6/14). Additionally, a higher percentage of older respondents, 50% (4/8), than younger respondents, 43% (6/14), reported serving in leadership. There are also differences across the MEPI programs. Among respondents from the Tomorrow's Leaders Program, 71% (5/7) said they held a leadership position. In comparison, 50% (4/8) of respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship and 33% (3/9) from the Student Leaders Program served in a leadership role.

Among respondents who served in a leadership role, 57% were in a professional setting, 29% in a community setting, and 14% in an academic setting.⁵ A professional setting was the most common type of leadership role across all respondent ages, gender, and MEPI program.



Note: Percentages for type of leadership roles are based on 12 respondents who could select multiple options.

Beyond serving in a leadership role, respondents have also demonstrated leadership in their workplaces and communities. In the workplace, respondents have provided training and assistance to colleagues. One respondent said, "I have used my skills and leadership through work, giving trainings...and helping on the ground after what happened in Beirut (after 4/8/2020 explosion)." Another noted demonstrating leadership through "training, as well as participating in sessions of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, and presenting working papers documenting crimes against Yemeni civilians." While another mentioned, "I helped my colleagues in my workplace to develop their skills in managing field teams and preparing project proposals...which developed their performance so that they could be promoted to higher positions." Other respondents have shown leadership in their communities by mentoring and encouraging youth and others. Respondents have provided "mentoring and consultations to various youth," "advice and logistical support to the youth active in the field," and "practical training to reduce conflict in a region suffering from insecurity."



"I have intensively encouraged people to change their lives [for] the better, whether through guidance in the job market, applying for schools, or [improving] their well-being."

⁵ Percentages based on 12 respondents who served in a leadership setting and could select multiple options.

C. Impact of the MEPI Alumni Connection Program

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, virtual discussion and online training were the activities with the highest participation. Additionally, the main reason respondents did not participate in activities was due to travel difficulties.

Respondents' engagement with the MEPI Alumni Connection has led to numerous positive outcomes. They built new relationships and collaborated with other MEPI alumni on projects, initiatives, and business ideas. Additionally, respondents have been able to conduct numerous events and activities to promote specific issues and awareness. Support received from the MEPI Alumni Connection, such as the Alumni Venture Fund, has enabled respondents to conduct and expand 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.

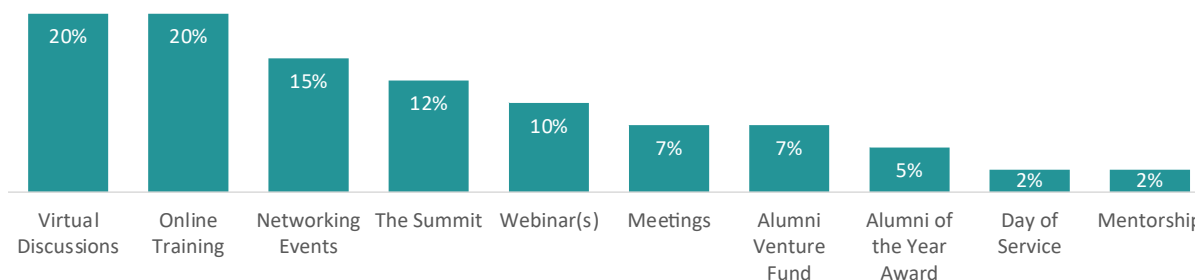
Alumni Engagement

Professional Development Activities

Of 24 respondents, 67% (16/24) participated in networking or professional development opportunities through the MEPI Alumni Connection within the past two years. However, the participation rate differs across gender, age, and MEPI program. The participation rate among males is 71% (10/14), while among females it is 67% (6/9). Additionally, the one respondent who did not provide their gender did not participate in networking opportunities. Across age, 71% (10/14) of younger and 56% (5/9) of older respondents participated in these opportunities. Among the three main MEPI programs, 88% (7/8) of respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship, 57% (4/7) from the Tomorrow's Leaders Program, and 56% (5/9) from the Student Leaders Program had participated.

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

Participation by type of networking or professional development opportunity



Note: Data based on 16 respondents who indicated that they had participated in a networking or professional development opportunity. Respondents could select all options that apply.



The activities with the highest participation were virtual discussions (20%) and online training (20%). The next most highly participated activities were networking events (15%), the Summit (12%), and webinars(s) (10%).⁶ Virtual discussions (17%), the Summit (17%), and online training (17%) had the highest participation among younger respondents. However, online training (27%) had the highest participation among older respondents.⁷

Of 24 respondents, 33% (8/24) said they did not participate in any networking or professional development opportunities through the MEPI Alumni Connection. These respondents were then asked to respond as to their primary reason for not participating. Of the eight respondents who answered, four said they could not attend due to travel difficulties, three noted they were not invited, and one said they lacked time to attend. Lack of participation may also be due to challenges in accessing opportunities offered through virtual communications. For example, scholarship opportunities may be announced through virtual monthly newsletters. One respondent mentioned that they had “poor internet,” which resulted in “not [being] able to complete some documents related to scholarships.”

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, 67% (16/24) of respondents have built relationships with new alumni. Additionally, 56% (9/16) of respondents have built relationships with at 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, 29% (7/24) 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 males, 21% (3/14) have collaborated with other alumni, while 44% (4/9) of females have. Additionally, respondents have collaborated with civil society organizations to conduct events that promote specific issues and awareness. In the past two years, 136 events and activities were led by 19 respondents. While one respondent led 50 different events, the majority, 79% (15/19), conducted five or fewer. Of the total 136 events, 57% were conducted by eight females and 43% by 11 males.

 **136** events and activities were led by **19** respondents. 

Beyond helping develop relationships and collaborations, the MEPI Alumni Connection has also helped respondents conduct and expand community projects through offering a menu of opportunities and support. Support includes the Alumni Venture Fund and mentorship. Among respondents who completed a community project, 38% (5/13) report receiving at least one form of support. The most common support respondents received was the Alumni Venture Fund, which four respondents received. The other respondent noted receiving support through a “COVID-19 initiative.” Moreover, in addition to the Alumni Venture Fund, two respondents also reported receiving mentorship.

⁶ Percentages based on 16 respondents who participated in networking/professional development opportunities and selected multiple options.

⁷ Data based on 14 younger and 9 older respondents who had participated in networking opportunities.

Support received from the Alumni Venture Fund enabled respondents' projects to have greater and more long-term impact. One respondent noted that the MEPI Alumni Fund "helped us in the advancement of 20 displaced women to be active women in the community field and help their communities to adapt to new societies." Another said their community project was "still functional and [had] major development dimensions," even after award completion. Additionally, another respondent noted, "the project was a huge success. As the 22 trainees told me that the income level of their projects increased."



"I implemented three projects with the MEPI Alumni Fund, and each project has [had] great results."

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 24 respondents, 83% (20/24) said they have shared what they learned through a MEPI alumni activity (event, training, partnership, etc.) with others. Among respondents who said they had shared what they learned, 26% have done so with colleagues and 26% in-person. An additional 15% shared what they learned online, 11% with family, 9% in a publication, 7% with other MEPI alumni, and 6% on a social media page.⁸ Therefore, MEPI alumni activities likely benefit alumni and their colleagues, friends, and family.



83% of respondents shared what they learned through a MEPI alumni activity with others.

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 online training, 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 2-4-day intensive training and online events during evening hours. Additionally, respondents noted that they would like to develop skills in conflict resolution, NGO management, and women and gender issues. In terms of support, respondents indicated that the most helpful form of financial support would be through a grant. Additionally, having a professional mentor would be the most beneficial form of non-financial support.

Alumni Needs

The majority of respondents, 65% (15/23), 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 participating in MEPI Alumni Connection activities. Among 23

⁸ Data based on 20 respondents who shared what they learned and could select multiple options.

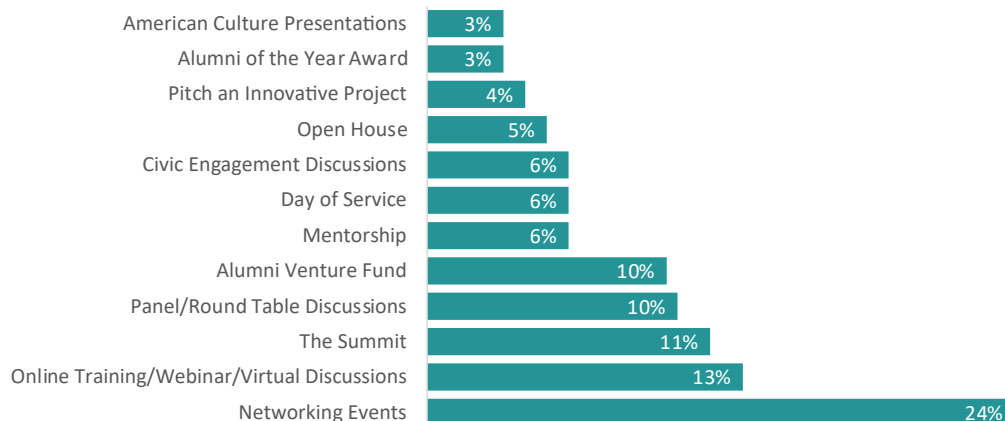
respondents, 70% (16/23) reported that they always felt secure and 22% (5/23) often felt secure. However, one respondent reported they infrequently felt secure (4%), and one rarely felt secure (4%). This result indicates that, overall, most respondents feel secure and comfortable participating in alumni activities.

Opportunities to Further Strengthen and Grow the MEPI Alumni Connection

There are several opportunities for the MEPI Alumni Connection to continue its support for alumni and meet their needs. Therefore, 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 stated that the activities they would most like to see implemented were networking events (24%), such as networking events with diplomats and professionals. The next most desired activities were online events (13%), including online training, webinars, and virtual discussions. Other activities included the Summit (11%), panel/roundtable discussions (10%), and the Alumni Venture Fund (10%).⁹

Respondents' Desired Activities



Note: Data based on 29 responses in which multiple options could be selected.

The most common responses regarding the format of events/training were 2-4-day intensive training (25%), followed by online events during evening hours (16%), online events during weekends (13%), and in-person training during weekends (13%). Additional responses included in-person events during work hours (11%), in-person training during evening hours (9%), and up to 1-day training (9%). The format of events least preferred by respondents was online during work hours (5%). The format most preferred by respondents across all ages, gender, and MEPI program was 2-4-day intensive training.¹⁰

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 conflict resolution (13%), NGO management (11%), and women and gender issues (9%). Additional responses included small business development (7%), negotiation (7%), advocacy and stakeholder engagement (5%), community

⁹ Data based on 29 respondents in which multiple options could be selected.

¹⁰ Data based on 30 respondents in which multiple options could be selected.

engagement (5%), renewable energy (5%), developing public-private partnerships (5%), promoting youth engagement (5%), and project management (5%). The skill most preferred among males was conflict resolution (16%), and among females, it was NGO management (13%).¹¹

Top three skills respondents would like to develop.



Note: Data based on 30 respondents in which multiple options could be selected.

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, 29 respondents indicated grants would be most helpful (39%), followed by investments (25%), and donations (15%). Instead of choosing a specific resource, 14% of respondents said all financial resources would be helpful (i.e., grant, investment, donation, and loan). Additionally, 5% of respondents indicated a loan would be beneficial and 2% said no financial resources were needed.

Additionally, 29 respondents indicated that the most beneficial non-financial resource would be a professional mentor (27%). Other non-financial resources included having a partner and/or partners (23%), access to alumni or professionals with relevant experience (20%), access to in-person training (20%), and access to online training (10%).¹²

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 and increasing their motivation for community service. It has also opened doors to new opportunities for respondents and helped them develop new skills. Moreover, MEPI has improved respondents' ability to positively impact their communities by enhancing their community engagement and leadership skills. Respondents also noted their ability was improved because of the training/education and networking opportunities MEPI provided. Additionally, respondents felt they were able to grow personally.

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 work in various industries, hold executive-level positions, and have started their businesses and organizations. Respondents have also conducted community projects and experienced success, despite complex challenges. Moreover, respondents have had an impact by serving as leaders professionally and within their communities by mentoring and encouraging others.

¹¹ Data based on 30 respondents in which multiple options could be selected.

¹² Data for financial and non-financial resources is based on 29 respondents who could select multiple options.

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 virtual discussion and online training. Respondents' engagement and participation in these activities have led to many beneficial outcomes, including collaborations and community projects. Respondents have also collaborated with other MEPI alumni and civil society organizations. Moreover, support received from the MEPI Alumni Connection has enabled respondents to conduct and expand their community projects, resulting in a more significant impact.

Overall, most respondents felt secure and comfortable when participating in alumni activities. However, not all respondents said they felt very secure. Therefore, additional follow-up should be conducted to understand alumni's needs and identify potential solutions in helping ensure all alumni feel comfortable and secure. 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 networking events and online training. The format of events most preferred by respondents were 2-4-day intensive training and online events during weekends. Additionally, respondents would like to develop skills in conflict resolution, NGO management, and women and gender issues. To further support alumni's ability to improve or launch new projects, respondents said a grant would be the most beneficial financial resource and a professional mentor, the most helpful non-financial resource.

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