

# MEPI Alumni Connection

## رابطة خريجي ميبي



### 2020 MEPI Alumni Survey

#### Gulf Countries

#### Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia

#### 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: Gulf Countries

MEPI Alumni Connection

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## Respondent Profile

**31 respondents**

Bahrain | Kuwait | Saudi Arabia

Program completion years: 2006 -2020



### Age

20-29 years 67%  
30+ 33%

### Gender

Female 74% Male 26%

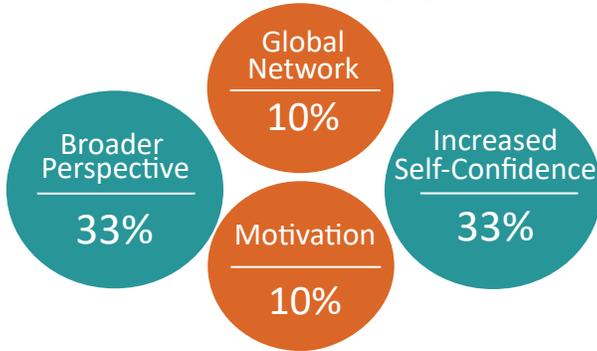


### MEPI Program

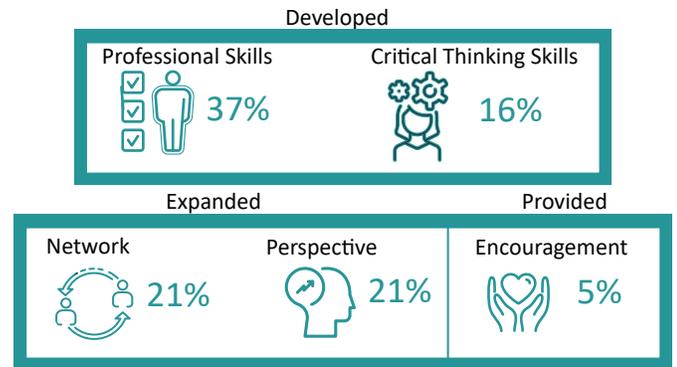
48% Student Leaders Program  
26% Leadership Development Fellowship  
26% Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship Program

## Impact of MEPI

How was MEPI a life-changing experience?



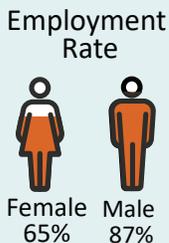
How MEPI has helped develop alumni's ability to make an impact in their communities.



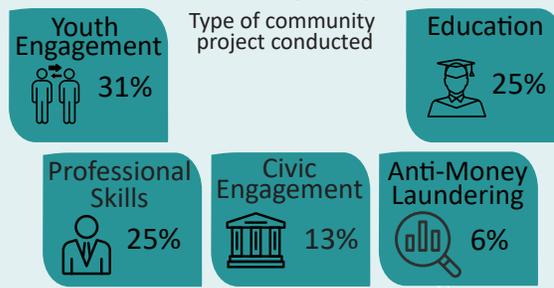
## Alumni Impact

### Employment

71% of respondents are currently working.



### Community Projects



### Leadership

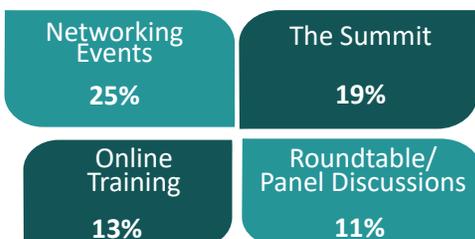
82% of respondents have served in a leadership role in the past year.



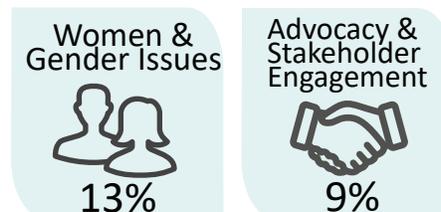
31% of respondents conducted at least one community project within the past two years.

## MEPI Alumni Interests

### Desired Activities



### Top 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 Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.

## 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 13% (31/230) of all eligible alumni from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait who had contact information available at the time of the survey. The original analysis included Qatar. However, no respondents completed the survey, and therefore Qatar was not included in this report.

### III. Results

#### A. Respondent Profile

The survey includes 31 alumni respondents whose citizenship is from Bahrain, Kuwait, or Saudi Arabia, making up approximately 8% (31/408) of the total sample of alumni respondents across all participating countries and programs. Of the 31 respondents, 16 were from Bahrain, eight were from Kuwait, and seven were from Saudi Arabia. Regarding gender, there is a higher representation of females, 74% (23/31), compared to males, 26% (8/31). Additionally, respondents are more likely to be younger; 67% (20/30) are 20-29 years old and 33% (10/30) are 30 years old or older.



Across MEPI leadership programs, 48% (15/31) of respondents were alumni of the Student Leaders Program, 26% (8/31) from the Leadership Development Fellowship, and 26% (8/31) from the Tomorrow’s Leaders Scholarship Program. However, there are differences in the representation of MEPI programs across the three countries. All seven (100%) respondents from Saudi Arabia were from the Student Leaders Program. From Kuwait, respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship had the largest representation, 50% (4/8), while from Bahrain, those from the Tomorrow’s Leaders Scholarship Program had the largest representation, 44% (7/16).

#### MEPI Program

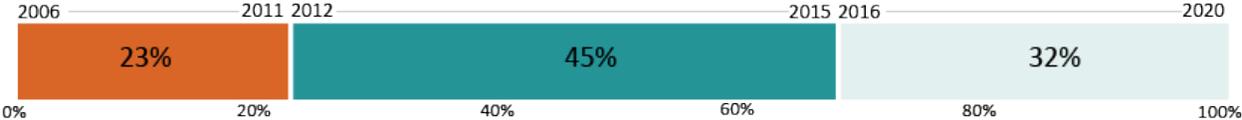
<b>Student Leaders Program</b>  <b>48%</b>	<b>Leadership Development Fellowship</b>  <b>26%</b>	<b>Tomorrow’s Leaders Scholarship Program</b>  <b>26%</b>
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Note: Data based on 31 respondents.

Respondents’ program completion year ranges from 2006 – 2020, with no respondents from 2007. About a quarter of respondents, 23% (7/31), completed their program in 2006-2011 and 45% (14/31) in 2012-

2015. The remaining 32% (10/31) completed their program in 2016-2020. Respondents from Saudi Arabia completed their program from 2006-2017, Kuwait from 2010 – 2015, and Bahrain from 2009-2020. Additionally, the two respondents who completed their program in 2020 were from the Tomorrow’s Leaders Scholarship Program.

**Percentage of respondents by MEPI Program Completion Year**



Note: Data based on 31 respondents.

Findings also show that of the 23 respondents who provided their current or primary country of residence, 87% (20/23) resided in the same place as their citizenship and 13% resided abroad. Among respondents from Saudi Arabia, 100% (4/4) resided in Saudi Arabia. Among respondents from Kuwait, five (71%) resided in Kuwait, one in Egypt, and one in the United Kingdom. Among respondents from Bahrain, 11 (92%) resided in Bahrain and one in the United Arab Emirates.

**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 self-confidence, and develop a global professional and personal network. Respondents also noted that MEPI motivated them to pursue their interests. Additionally, respondents felt that MEPI enhanced their ability to impact their communities positively. MEPI helped respondents develop professional skills and critical thinking skills. It also expanded their network and perspective and provided encouragement.

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 used skills gained from MEPI to succeed in their current positions. In their communities, respondents have been active, conducting projects mainly focused on youth engagement, education, and professional skills. These projects have experienced success despite challenges and difficult situations in the country. Respondents’ impact also extends to serving in leadership roles and demonstrating leadership in their communities and the workplace.

**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 perspective, increase their self-confidence, develop a global network, and strengthen their motivation.

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



Note: Data based on 21 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.

Of 21 respondents, 33% (7/21) said MEPI was life-changing because it helped develop a broader and more global perspective. One respondent said that MEPI enhanced “an ability to form my own perspective of issues and matters I see in my daily [life]. I believe [that] was one of the most powerful tools I gained through the program.” Others noted that MEPI “[broadened] my horizon to understand how government works,” “gave me another perspective about [cultural] differences,” and “[opened] my mind on wide numbers of topics.”



“Through the exposure to different political settings, I gained a better understanding of international and internal politics. I have also been exposed to lobbying and influencing public policy, which is what I work in now. Without my undergraduate exposure that I have gained through MEPI I wouldn't have landed my past job in diplomacy and my current job in public policy.”

“MEPI provided us with the exposure that was needed to break all boundaries between countries and cultures. If anything, it taught us the power to change, accept, and understand others who come from different backgrounds. It taught us the importance of respect and the perseverance in order to achieve our goals.”



Another 33% (7/21) of respondents noted that MEPI transformed their lives by increasing their self-confidence. One respondent mentioned they were able to “[explore] parts of myself, knowledge and skills that I didn't know existed which helped me shape what I want to see myself as in the future.” Another said that “[MEPI] gave me the confidence I needed to become an active agent of change. I have developed my leadership skills to a level I never thought I'd reach.” While another said, “I know very well that MEPI's experience has given me a lot of confidence, the ability to express [an] opinion and defend it.”

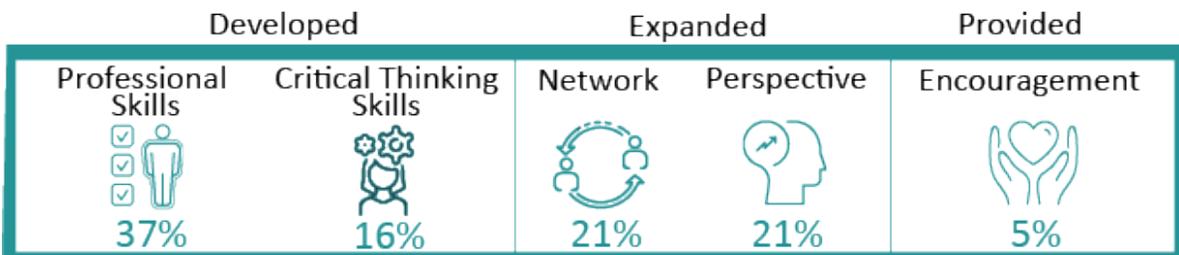
Additionally, 10% (2/21) of respondents said they developed a global professional and personal network. One respondent said, “[MEPI] allowed me to establish networks with people all over the world- with different interests, which allowed for building [a] global support circle.” Another respondent noted, “the network with people from the Arab world I would never be able to connect with such amazing people and inspiring ones.” The remaining 10% (2/21) of respondents mentioned that MEPI increased “the desire to influence and enter the field of elections” and motivated them to “join a postgraduate program in education.” There were also three respondents (14%) who noted that MEPI was life-changing but did not explain.

In addition to being a transformative experience, respondents also stated that MEPI improved their ability to impact their communities. It helped respondents develop professional skills and skills in critical

thinking. Additionally, it expanded their network, enlarged their perspective, and provided encouragement.

Of the 20 respondents who provided an answer to the question of how MEPI helped develop their ability to impact their community, one respondent said, “looking at the situation in Kuwait, I...don’t do anything I learned through MEPI.” However, the remaining 19 respondents said that MEPI had enhanced their ability. Of these 19 respondents, 37% (7/19) said MEPI helped them develop professional skills, including “communication skills,” “leadership skills...needed to become an active agent of change,” and skills needed to “plan a project and measure its impact.” Additionally, 16% (3/19) of respondents noted they developed critical thinking skills to “examine the gaps and anomalies that...need solutions,” and 21% (4/19) said they were able to expand their network. Another 21% (4/19) noted that MEPI grew their perspective and “definitely opened...eyes,” and 5% (1/19) said they were encouraged.

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



Note: Data based on 19 responses to the open-ended question, “How has MEPI helped you develop your ability to make an impact in your community?”



**Developed: Professional Skills**

“We have gained professional skills through leadership and project management workshops.”



**Developed: Critical Thinking Skills**

“By looking at things critically without any societal boundaries but trying to find solutions while taking all factors into consideration.”



**Expanded: Network**

MEPI helped “by creating the platform to share our success stories, shortcomings and how can we turn them into strengths.”



**Expanded: Perspective**

“[MEPI] gave me a broader view on how to look at problems from looking at it from different perspectives and from people with different backgrounds.”



**Provided: Encouragement**

MEPI “encouraged me to enter the political sphere.”

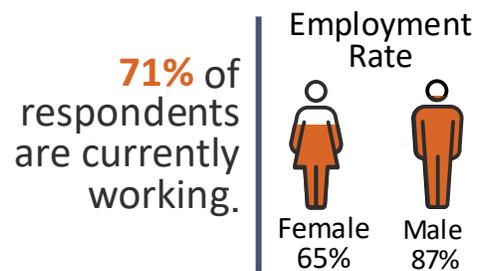
Note: Quotes based on 19 responses to the open-ended question, “How has MEPI helped you develop your ability to make an impact in your community?”

## 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, 71% (22/31) of respondents said they were currently working with paid employment. The percentage of respondents who reported having employment was fairly similar across the three countries; however, there were differences across gender and age. The employment rate was higher among males, 87% (7/8), compared to females, 65% (15/23). The employment rate was also higher among older respondents than younger respondents, 80% (8/10) and 65% (13/20), respectively.



Note: Data based on 31 respondents to the question, "Are you currently working? (Only select yes if you have paid employment)"

Of 21 employed respondents who provided their position level, 10% (2/21) held an entry-level position, 57% (12/21) a mid-level position, 19% (4/21) an executive-level position, and 14% (3/21) were self-employed. Among all levels, employed respondents reported working across a variety of industries, organizations, and businesses. Of 16 respondents, 25% (4/16) worked for a large business with more than 200 employees, 19% (3/16) for a local non-government organization (NGO), 12% (2/16) for an international NGO, and 12% (2/16) for the local government. An additional 6% (1/16) worked for the national government, 6% (1/16) for a medium-sized business with 51-200 employees, and 19% (3/16) reported they were self-employed.

 **27%** 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, 27% (8/30) 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 starting a business in the past but are no longer business owners, they may not rely on income from their business and therefore do not consider themselves self-employed, or they may have started an organization and do not consider themselves self-employed or business owners. Among respondents who started a business/organization, 25% (3/8) said they had a partner they had 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.

 **25%** of respondents who started a business/organization had a partner they had met through their MEPI program or the alumni network.

MEPI has also helped respondents be successful in their careers as they applied skills learned from MEPI in their current positions. One respondent noted, “I am putting into practice what I have learned during my undergraduate studies...I am putting into practice the leadership, negotiation, interpersonal communication skills amongst others.” Another respondent mentioned that “[MEPI]...helped with communication with my management, especially taking [the] lead when they are not ready or available.” Other respondents noted they had applied skills in “leadership,” “community engagement,” and “how to create and work effectively with a team.”



“Skills of public speaking, networking, and leadership learned through the MEPI experience had tremendous impact on gaining my current job.”

“I’m using my leadership and public speaking skills to engage my students and teach them values, principles, and behaviors that would benefit not only them, but society as well.”



### Community Projects

Respondents have been active in their communities, as 31% (9/29) have conducted at least one community project within the past two years. Respondents from Saudi Arabia were more likely to have conducted a project, 50% (3/6), compared to respondents from Bahrain, 31% (5/16), and Kuwait, 14% (1/7). Additionally, older respondents were more likely to have conducted a project, 40% (4/10) compared to younger respondents, 22% (4/18)



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

Among respondents who conducted a community project, nine provided information about the type of project they performed. The most common type focused on youth engagement, 31%, followed by education, 25%, and professional skills, 25%. An additional 13% of respondents conducted projects on civic engagement and 6% on “anti-money laundering and combating terrorism.”<sup>1</sup> Youth engagement was the most common type of community project conducted by females, 36%, while education, 40%, and professional skills, 40%, were the most common among males.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, 44% (4/9) of respondents conducted more than one type of project.

<sup>1</sup> Percentages are based on nine respondents who conducted community projects, multiple options could be selected.

<sup>2</sup> Percentages are based on two male and seven female respondents who conducted community projects, multiple options could be selected.

Seven respondents estimated how many people they believe benefited from their projects. According to these responses, about 200 individuals were positively impacted by respondents' community projects. The smallest number of beneficiaries a respondent reported was 13, while the largest was 50.



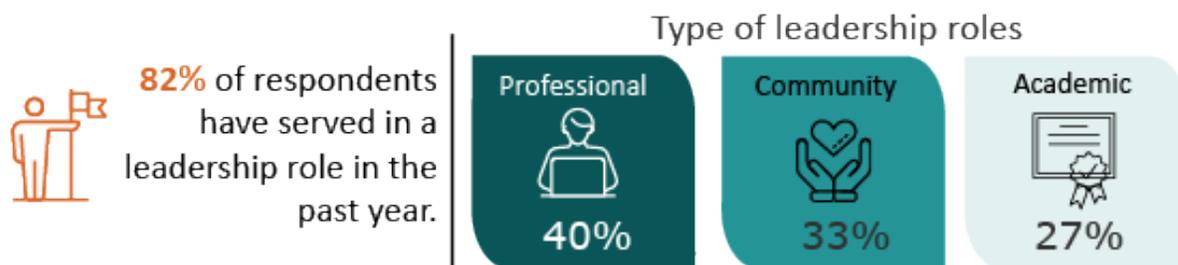
**200 individuals were positively impacted by respondents' community projects.**

Respondents also noted several challenges that made starting and growing their projects difficult. Some of these challenges included securing financial resources, political instability, and maintaining engagement. Respondents mentioned difficulties in "getting contracts," handling "expenses," and accessing "funding." Others noted challenges in "political unrest" and "corruption." While other respondents mentioned difficulties in "volunteer turnover" and "resistance from people to change."

Despite challenges, many respondents have been able to impact their communities and experience success in their projects. The impact of respondents' projects can be further understood through accounts of their greatest success or result. Respondents noted the impact of their projects on raising awareness and the community. Respondents were able to "[bring] more awareness about the importance of volunteering," "[raise] awareness about animal welfare," and "shed...light on the issue and convince the party to invest their time, interest, and money with us." Additionally, respondents "[motivated] the community to continue [to] serve the underprivileged people" and start to "[change] compliance culture in Kuwait."

## Leadership

Respondents have also impacted their communities by serving in leadership roles. Of 28 respondents, 82% (23/28) have served in a leadership role within the past year. Females were slightly more likely to have served in a leadership position than males, 85% (17/20) compared to 75% (6/8). Respondents from the Tomorrow's Leaders Program were also more likely to have served in a leadership position, 86% (6/7), followed by respondents from the Student Leaders Program, 85% (11/13), and the Leadership Development Fellowship, 75% (6/8). There were also differences among the countries. The percentage of respondents who served in a leadership role was highest in Saudi Arabia, 100% (6/6), followed by respondents from Bahrain, 93% (14/15), and Kuwait, 43% (3/7).



Note: Percentages for type of leadership roles are based on 23 respondents who could select multiple options.

Among respondents who served in a leadership role, 40% were in a professional setting, 33% in a community setting, and 27% in an academic setting.<sup>3</sup> A professional setting was most common among

<sup>3</sup> Data is based on 23 respondents who served in a leadership setting and could select multiple options.

males (83%), while a community setting was most common among females (42%). An academic setting (40%) was most common among younger respondents, and among older respondents, a professional setting was most common (56%). Additionally, respondents from Kuwait were most likely to have served in a professional (40%) or community setting (40%). Conversely, respondents from Saudi Arabia were most likely to have served in an academic setting (50%), while a professional setting was most common among respondents from Bahrain (42%).<sup>4</sup>

Beyond serving in a leadership role, respondents also demonstrated leadership in their communities and workplaces. When asked how they have used their leadership skills to help people, respondents noted they have taken on more responsibility in their jobs and encouraged others. One respondent noted they had demonstrated leadership “by taking ownership of [their] organization’s goals and objectives and [translating] this into solid and clear tasks and responsibilities.” Other respondents have worked in encouraging and leading others in their communities. One respondent said, “I used my storytelling skills to inspire volunteers to engage and join our efforts. I used my leadership skills to maintain our efforts and sail through challenges and capture the opportunities.” Others noted they have “starting volunteering initiatives and [allowed] people to lead” and “[influenced] them by motivational speeches.”

“I have been a member at a Toastmasters club to develop my leadership and public speaking skills which I use to encourage people to develop themselves. I have also used those skills in my primary job as an educator; I have helped students develop their English language proficiency as well as taught them certain values and skills that would help them in their social and professional life.”



“Through the numerous trainings and workshops organized under the auspices of MEPI, I have gained multiple skills that I used to impact people's lives. I worked for a little over three years in the field of building capacity and I worked directly with community leaders and influencers in Africa as well as women leader in the Arab region. In particular the trainings provided [were] in the field of preventing radicalization and extremism leading to terrorism. I have also been part of influencing direct policy frameworks that impact people's safety in conflict torn countries in Africa.”



### 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 the Summit were the activities with the highest participation. Additionally, the primary reasons respondents did not participate in activities were because they were not invited or lacked time.

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

<sup>4</sup> Data is based on six male respondents and 17 female respondents, six respondents from Saudi Arabia, three from Kuwait, and 14 from Bahrain. Multiple options could be selected.

specific issues and awareness. Support received from the MEPI Alumni Connection has enabled respondents to conduct 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.

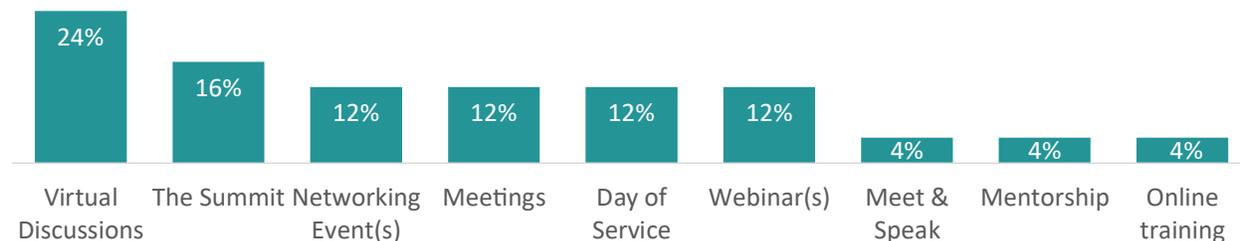
## Alumni Engagement

### Professional Development Activities

Of 28 respondents, 50% (14/28) participated in networking or professional development opportunities through the MEPI Alumni Connection within the past two years. However, the participation rate differs across age, MEPI program, and country. The participation rate among younger respondents is 59% (10/17) and 40% (4/10) among older respondents. Across MEPI programs, 62% (8/13) of respondents from the Student Leaders Program had participated, compared to 43% (3/7) of respondents from the Tomorrow’s Leaders Program and 38% (3/8) from the Leadership Development Fellowship. Additionally, the participation rate was highest among respondents from Bahrain, 60% (9/15). This result is compared to 50% (3/6) of respondents from Saudi Arabia and 29% (2/7) from Kuwait.

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

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



Note: Data based on 14 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 (24%) and the Summit (16%). The next most highly participated activities were networking events (12%), meetings (12%), the MEPI Day of Service (12%), and webinars (12%).<sup>5</sup> Virtual discussions had the highest participation among males (38%), while the Summit had the highest participation among females (24%). Additionally, virtual discussions (50%) had the highest participation among respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship. However, networking events (20%) and virtual discussions (20%) had the highest participation among the Student Leaders Program respondents. In comparison, the MEPI Day of Service (33%), the Summit (33%),

<sup>5</sup> Percentages are based on 14 respondents who participated in networking/professional development opportunities and could select multiple options.

and webinars (33%) had the highest participation among respondents from the Tomorrow's Leaders Program.<sup>6</sup>

Of 28 respondents, 50% (14/28) said they did not participate in 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 respondents who answered, 57% (8/14) said they were not invited to any MEPI alumni networking events. All alumni who completed the survey had current contact information in the MEPI Alumni Connection database and therefore would have received a request to subscribe to alumni notifications, emails, and events. Respondents who indicated they were not invited to events may not be receiving information because they have yet to subscribe or decided to unsubscribe. Additionally, 29% (4/14) said they lacked time to attend events, and 14% (2/14) noted they were not interested in the topic of any MEPI alumni event.

### Respondents' reasons for not participating in alumni activities.



Note: Data based on 14 respondents.

## 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, 58% (15/26) of respondents have built relationships with new alumni. Additionally, 23% (6/26) 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, 14% (4/28) of respondents have collaborated with at least one other alumni from MEPI or the Department of State on a project, initiative, or business idea. About a quarter, 25% (2/8), of males have collaborated with other alumni, while 10% (2/20) 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, 69 events and activities were led by 17 respondents. Of the 69 events, 70% were conducted by 12 females and 30% by five males.

 **69** events and activities were led by **17** 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 MEPI Day of Service, training/resources, and mentorship. Among respondents who completed a community project, 33% (3/9) report receiving at least one form of support.

<sup>6</sup> Percentages are based on four male and 10 female respondents and three respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship, eight from the Student Leaders Program, and three from the Tomorrow's Leaders Program who had participated in networking opportunities. Multiple options could be selected.

One respondent noted receiving support through the MEPI Day of Service, another through training/resources, and the other through mentorship.

Moreover, 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 28 respondents, 79% (22/28) 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, 28% have done so with colleagues and 21% in-person. An additional 15% shared what they learned with other MEPI alumni, 15% with family, 9% on a social media page, 6% online, 4% in a publication, and 2% with other Department of State alumni.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, MEPI alumni activities likely benefit alumni and their colleagues, friends, and family.



79% 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 were 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 the Summit, 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 weekends and 2-4-day intensive training. Additionally, respondents noted that they would like to develop skills in women and gender issues, advocacy and stakeholder engagement, conflict resolution, developing public-private partnerships, decision-making, and small business development. 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, 45% (11/24), 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 24 respondents, 42% (10/24) reported that they always felt secure and 21% (5/24) often felt secure. However, 8% (2/24) reported they infrequently felt secure and 29% (7/24) rarely felt secure. This result indicates that, overall, most respondents felt secure and comfortable participating in alumni activities.

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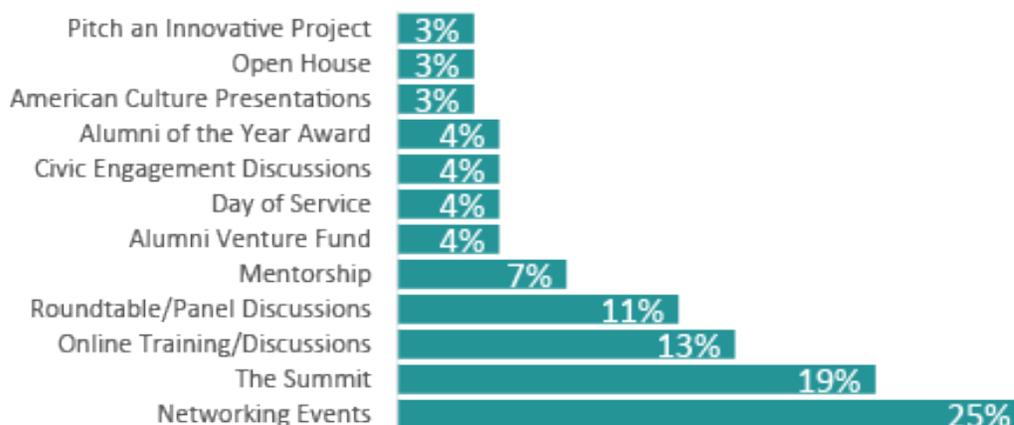
<sup>7</sup> Data is based on 22 respondents who shared what they learned and could select multiple options.

## 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 (25%), such as networking events with diplomats and professionals. The next most desired activities were the Summit (19%) and online events (13%), including online training, webinars, and virtual discussions. Other activities included roundtable/panel discussions (11%), mentorship (7%), the Alumni Venture Fund (4%), the MEPI Day of Service (4%), civic engagement discussions (4%), and the Alumni of the Year Award (4%).<sup>8</sup>

### Respondents' Desired Activities



Note: Data based on 31 responses in which multiple options could be selected.

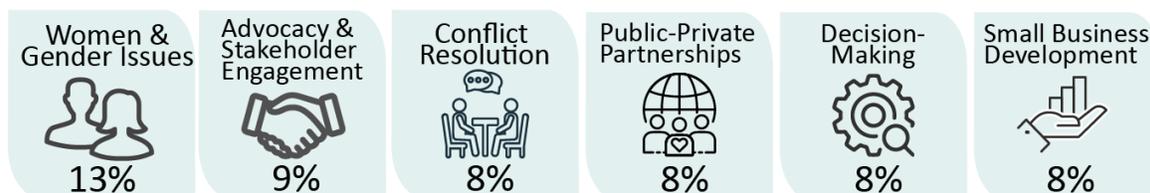
The most common responses regarding the format of events/training were online events during weekends (18%), followed by 2-4-day intensive training (17%), online events during evening hours (16%), and in-person training during weekends (16%). Additional responses included in-person training during evening hours (12%), 1-day intensive training (12%), and in-person training during work hours (7%). The format least preferred by respondents was online during work hours (3%).

Respondents were also asked to select the top skills they would like to develop to advance their community and professional leadership. Among all respondents, the skill most preferred by respondents was women and gender issues (13%). Additional responses included advocacy and stakeholder engagement (9%), conflict resolution (8%), developing public-private partnerships (8%), decision-making (8%), and small business development (8%). The skills most preferred among respondents from Saudi Arabia were renewable energy/environmental issues (14%), decision-making (14%), and small business development (14%). Among respondents from Kuwait, advocacy and stakeholder engagement (17%) was

<sup>8</sup> Data is based on 31 respondents in which multiple options could be selected.

the skill most preferred, while women and gender issues (21%) was most preferred among Bahrain respondents.<sup>9</sup>

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



Note: Data based on 31 responses 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, 31 respondents indicated that a grant would be most helpful (43%), followed by an investment (23%). Instead of choosing a specific resource, 15% of respondents said no financial resources were needed. Additionally, 11% said a donation would be most helpful, and 6% said all financial resources would be helpful (i.e., grant, investment, donation, and loan). The resource least preferred by respondents was a loan (2%).

Regarding the most beneficial non-financial resource, 31 respondents said it would be a professional mentor (32%). Other non-financial resources included having access to in-person training (19%), having a partner(s) (18%), access to online training (16%), and access to alumni or professionals with relevant experience (15%).<sup>10</sup>

## 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 self-confidence. It also helped grow their network to include professionals from different regions and motivated them to pursue their interests. Moreover, MEPI has improved respondents' ability to positively impact their communities by developing their professional and critical thinking skills, expanding their network and perspective, and providing encouragement.

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 and have applied skills learned from MEPI in their current positions. Respondents have also conducted community projects and experienced success, despite complex challenges. Moreover, respondents have had an impact by serving as leaders in a professional capacity and within their communities by encouraging others.

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. Many respondents have participated in these opportunities and activities, with participation highest in virtual

<sup>9</sup> Data for format of events/training and skills is based on 31 respondents in which multiple options could be selected.

<sup>10</sup> Data for financial and non-financial resources is based on 31 respondents who could select multiple options.

discussions and the Summit. Respondents' engagement and participation in these activities have led to many beneficial outcomes, including collaborations and community projects. Respondents have collaborated with other MEPI alumni and civil society organizations. Moreover, support received from the MEPI Alumni Connection has enabled respondents to conduct community projects.

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 additional networking events and the Summit. The format of events most preferred by respondents were online events during weekends and 2-4-day intensive training. Additionally, the skills respondents would most like to develop were women and gender issues and advocacy and stakeholder engagement. 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>