

MEPI Alumni Connection

رابطة خريجي ميبي



MEPI



2020 MEPI Alumni Survey

Lebanon 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: Lebanon

MEPI Alumni Connection

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Respondent Profile



51 respondents
from 2004 to 2020 (program completion years)



Age

20-29 years 64%
30+ 36%

Gender

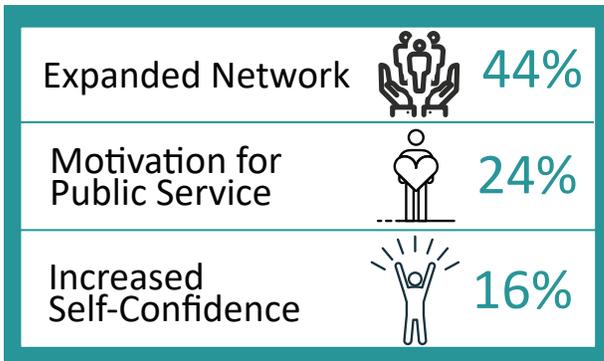
Female 55% Male 45%



MEPI Program

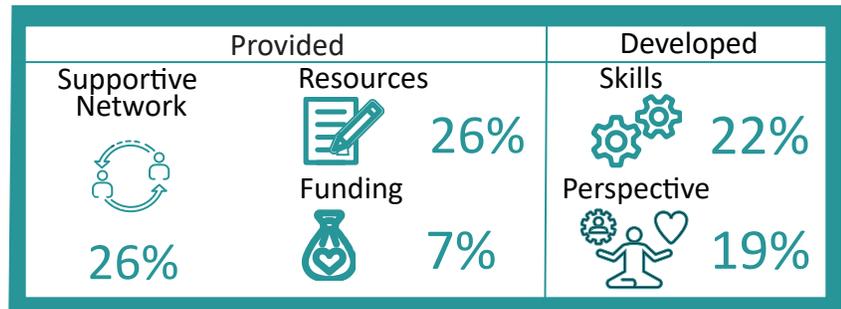
41% Student Leaders Program
31% Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship Program
25% Leadership Development Fellowship
2% MEPI Women's Business Internship

How was MEPI a life-changing experience?



Impact of MEPI

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

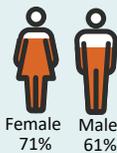


Alumni Impact

Employment

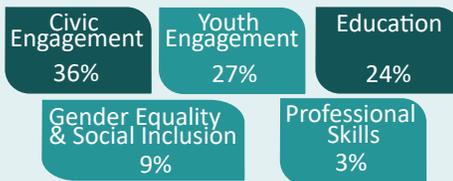
Employment rate of respondents

67% of respondents are currently working.



Community Projects

Type of community project conducted



48% of respondents conducted at least one community project within the past two years.

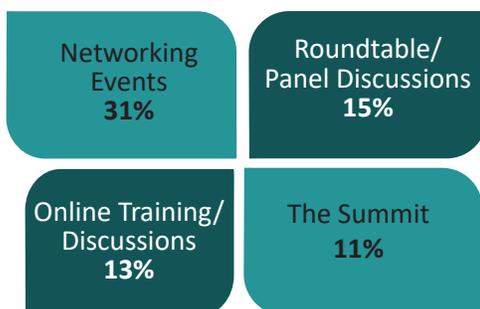
Leadership

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



MEPI Alumni Interests

Desired Activities



Top Skills Respondents Would Like to Develop



Most Helpful

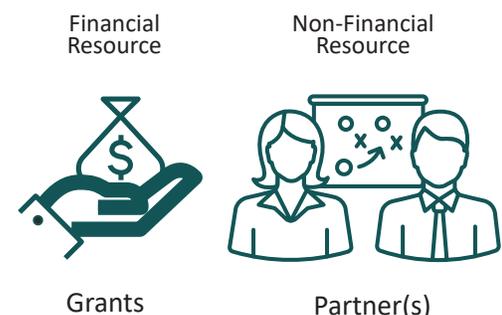


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I. Introduction and Background

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 Lebanon.

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.

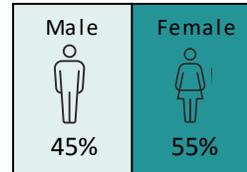
The survey was closed in September 2020 with a response rate of 30% (504/1663). Duplicates and any response from individuals not eligible for the MEPI Alumni Connection were removed for a total sample of 408 eligible responses. For analysis and reporting, the open-ended answers in Arabic were translated 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 28% (51/185) of all eligible alumni from Lebanon who had contact information available at the time of the survey.

III. Results

A. Respondent Profile

The survey includes 51 alumni respondents whose citizenship is Lebanon, making up approximately 13% (51/408) of the total sample of alumni respondents across all participating countries and programs. There is a slightly higher representation of female respondents, 55% (28/51), than male respondents, 45% (23/51). Additionally, there are more younger respondents compared to older respondents; 64% (27/42) of respondents are 20-29 years old and 36% (15/42) are 30 years old or older.



Note: Data based on 51 responses.

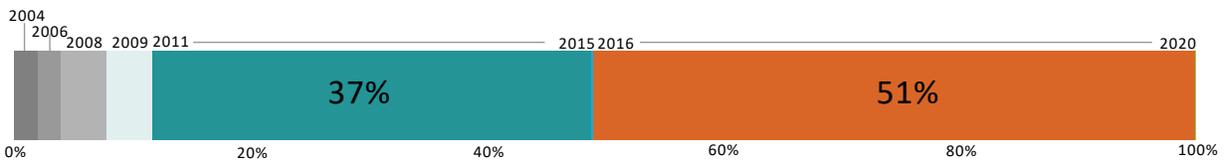
Across MEPI leadership programs, 41% (21/51) of respondents are alumni of the Student Leaders Program, 31% (16/51) are alumni of the Tomorrow’s Leaders Scholarship Program, and 25% (13/51) are alumni of the Leadership Development Fellowship. One respondent (2%) is an alumnus of the MEPI Women’s Business Internship (2%).

Student Leaders Program 41%	Tomorrow’s Leaders Scholarship Program 31%	Leadership Development Fellowship 25%	MEPI Women’s Business Internship 2%
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Note: Data based on 51 responses.

Respondents’ completion year of their program ranges from 2004 – 2020, with no respondents from 2005, 2007, or 2010. There is a higher percentage of respondents who completed their program within the last four years. About 12% (6/51) of respondents completed their program in 2004, 2006, 2008, or 2009. Additionally, 37% (19/51) of respondents completed their program in 2011-2015 and 51% (26/51) in 2016 -2020. All four respondents (8%) who completed their program in 2020 are from the Tomorrow’s Leaders Scholarship Program.

Percentage of Respondents by MEPI Program Completion Year



Note: Data based on 51 respondents.

Findings also show that 76% (28/37) of respondents' current or primary country of residence is Lebanon and 24% (9/32) of respondents reside outside of Lebanon. Among the nine respondents who noted their current or primary country of residence was outside of Lebanon, one said they resided in Canada, one in France, one in Kuwait, one in Sweden, one in Turkey, and four in the United States.

B. Impact of MEPI

Survey results show that respondents' participation in their MEPI program had a significant impact on their lives. MEPI helped expand respondents' network, provide them with greater motivation for public service, and increase their self-confidence. Additionally, respondents felt that MEPI enhanced their ability to impact their communities positively. Respondents noted their ability was improved because of the supportive network, resources, and funding they received from MEPI. Moreover, MEPI helped respondents develop new skills and perspectives that further enhanced their abilities.

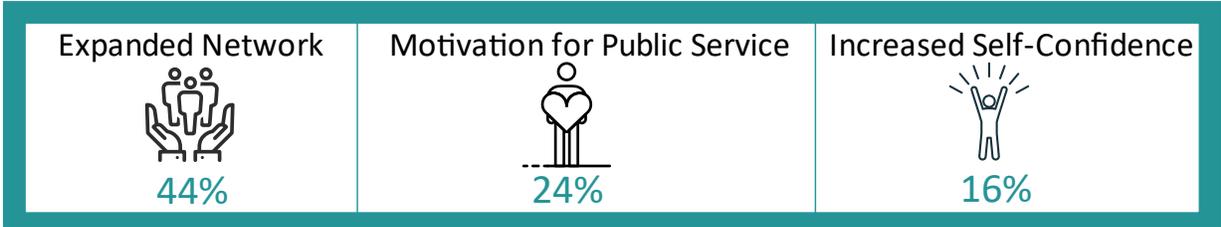
In turn, alumni respondents have had an impact in their careers and entrepreneurial activities, in their communities, and as leaders. Respondents work across a variety of industries and have started businesses and organizations. Additionally, respondents' participation in their MEPI program has helped them develop applicable job skills. In their communities, respondents have been active, conducting projects mainly focused on civic engagement and youth engagement. Respondents also noted considerable achievements in their community projects. Moreover, respondents' impact also extends to serving in leadership roles and demonstrating leadership through mentorships and other community activities.

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 have a greater impact in their communities.

Respondents were asked if MEPI was a life-changing experience and, if so, how MEPI had changed their lives. Respondents noted that MEPI helped expand their network, increase their motivation for public service, and strengthen their self-confidence.

How was MEPI was a life-changing experience?



Note: Data based on 25 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 25 respondents, 44% (11/25) said MEPI was life-changing because of the professional and personal network it afforded. MEPI enabled respondents to engage with individuals from diverse backgrounds, exchange ideas, and learn from experts. One respondent said, MEPI "was a life-changing experience...I was placed in DC and trained by experts...also, meeting locals and other participants from different

countries allowed me to widen and diversify my professional connections and make new friends.” Another respondent noted, “MEPI creates [the] opportunity to develop yourself, to...bolster your power for more networking and socializing with communities that are different than your original one.”

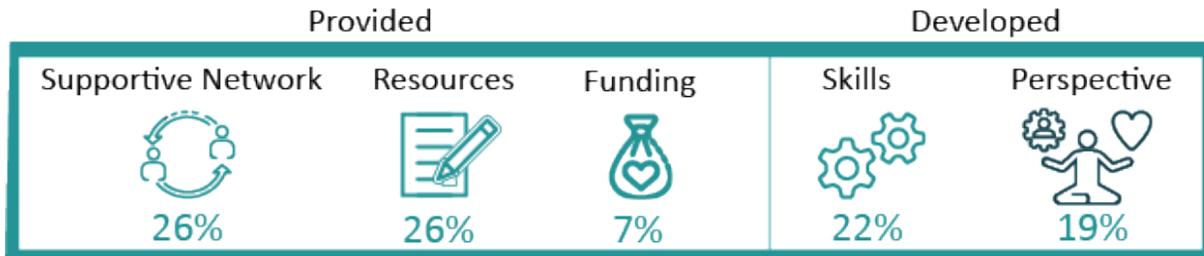
About a quarter, 24% (6/25), of respondents said MEPI changed their lives because it increased their motivation for public service. One respondent noted that MEPI “changed the course of my life as my priority was to be an engineer, but I changed my job one year after the MEPI experience and moved to [consult] in [the] public sector.” Another respondent noted that MEPI gave them “the courage to work on projects that serve the community and advocate for societal change.” While another mentioned that MEPI “opened my eyes to a whole new world full of hope, justice, equality, resilience, and inspired me to start working for the change that we need.” An additional 16% (4/25) of respondents mentioned that MEPI increased their self-confidence. One respondent said, “MEPI helped me to believe that I should always aim for the better, that there is a vast world out there for me and that I deserve better, and it is possible to get.” The remaining 16% (4/25) of respondents agreed that MEPI was life-changing but did not provide an explanation.

“I believe that the people I had the chance to meet through MEPI are proof of how life changing it is. Whether from my own country, or from all over the world, these people are inspiring, supportive, and impressive...I am grateful for them everyday.”



In addition to being a transformative experience, respondents also stated that MEPI enhanced their ability to impact their communities positively. Respondents noted that MEPI provided them with a supportive network and useful resources. Additionally, it helped respondents gain a new perspective, develop skills, and access funding. Of 27 respondents, 26% (7/27) said MEPI enabled them to impact their communities because it provided them with a network in which they could receive support, feedback, and connect with “like-minded active individuals.” Another 26% (7/27) of respondents noted the resources they received from MEPI increased their “ability to advocate for a project or civic engagement plan and to implement it,” and 7% (2/27) mentioned funding. About 22% (6/27) of respondents said they were able to develop new skills, including communication, leadership, and project management. The remaining 19% (5/27) of respondents said MEPI helped them gain a new perspective that enhanced their ability to effect change.

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



Note: Data based on 27 responses to the open-ended question, “How has MEPI helped you develop your ability to make an impact in your community?”

Supportive Network

“My frequent engagement with my MEPI fellows [enables] me to discuss...problems, my ideas, and seek support or at least feedback when needed.”

Resources

“The trainings that MEPI provided to us has helped me develop my ability to make an impact in my community.”

Funding

MEPI helped “through grants and connections with alumni.”

Skills

“MEPI developed my community service skills, leadership skills, and project management skills. I was able to work as a social worker and project managing assistant at an NGO in my community.”

Perspective

“Travel experience and culture enrichment helped me gain a new perspective that’s directed at social change.”

Note: Quotes are based on 27 responses to the open-ended question, “How has MEPI helped you develop your ability to make an impact in your community?”

Alumni Impact

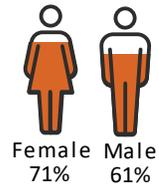
Alumni respondents have made an impact in their careers and entrepreneurial activities, their communities, and as leaders. Additionally, they have been able to use their experiences from MEPI to impact their communities further.

Employment and Entrepreneurship

At the time the survey was conducted, 67% (34/51) of respondents said they were currently working with paid employment. The employment rate is higher among females than males; 71% (20/28) of females are working compared to 61% (14/23) of males. Additionally, older respondents were slightly more likely to be working than younger respondents; 63% (17/27) of respondents 20-29 years old were employed compared to 67% (10/15) of respondents 30 years old or older. Regarding MEPI programs, 69% (9/13) of respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship were employed and 69% (11/16) from the Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship Program. Among respondents from the Student Leaders Program, the employment rate was slightly lower, 62% (13/21).¹

Employment rate of respondents

67% of respondents are currently working.



Note: Data based on 51 respondents to the question, "Are you currently working? (Only select yes, if you have paid employment)"

Among 33 employed respondents, 24% (8/33) held an entry-level position, 42% (14/33) a mid-level position, 24% (8/33) an executive-level position, and 9% (3/33) were self-employed or owned a business. Older respondents were more likely to hold executive-level positions and be self-employed. Among older respondents, 40% (4/10) held executive-level positions compared to 12% (2/17) of younger respondents. Additionally, 30% (3/10) of older respondents and zero younger respondents were self-employed.

Respondents work across a variety of organizations and businesses. Of 33 respondents, 36% (12/33) reported working for a local non-government organization (NGO), 24% (8/33) for a large business, and 15% (5/33) for a small business. Additionally, 6% (2/33) of respondents reported working for the local government, 6% (2/3) for the national government, 3% (1/33) for an international NGO, and 3% (1/33) for a medium-sized business. There were also two respondents (6%) who reported they were self-employed.



28% 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, 28% (14/50) said they started their own business or organization after their experience with MEPI. This discrepancy in responses may be because some respondents began a business in the past but are no longer business owners. Additionally, respondents may not rely on income from their business and therefore do not consider themselves self-employed, or they started an organization and do not consider themselves to be self-employed or a business owner. Among those who started a business/organization, 29% (4/14) said they had support from a partner they met through their MEPI program or the alumni network. This indicates that respondents' participation in MEPI programs and the alumni network has enhanced entrepreneurial activities.

¹ The one respondent from the MEPI Women's Business Internship was employed.

MEPI has also helped respondents be successful in their careers as they have developed applicable job skills. Respondents noted they have learned “good leadership skills in dealing with co-workers,” “negotiation and communication skills,” and “project management skills.” Other respondents said that MEPI helped them learn skills beneficial to research. For example, one respondent noted that “being a postdoc associate in a lab means that you need to exercise your leadership as well as team-building, skills that we acquired during our MEPI years.”

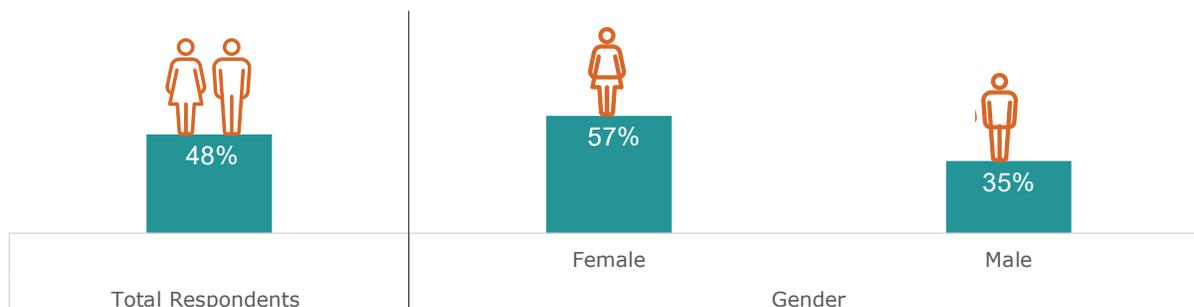


“I am a consultant who [specializes] in government and economic development. I have worked with several ministries in the MENA region on projects related to women, children, and [the] elderly...I've leveraged my MEPI experience...throughout all those engagements.”

Community Projects

Respondents have been active in their communities as 48% (23/48) have conducted at least one community project within the past two years. Furthermore, a higher percentage of females, 57% (16/28), compared to males, 35% (7/20), conducted a community project. Additionally, older respondents were more likely to have conducted a project, 64% (9/14), compared to younger respondents, 41% (11/27). Regarding MEPI programs, respondents from the Student Leaders Program, 60% (12/20), had a higher percentage of respondents who conducted a community project compared to respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship, 55% (6/11), and the Tomorrow’s Leaders Program, 25% (4/16).²

Percentage of respondents who conducted a community project



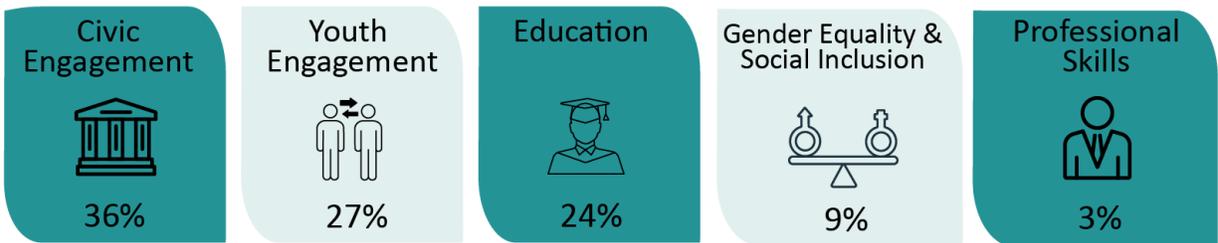
Note: Data based on 48 responses.

Among respondents who conducted a community project, 19 responded as to the type of project. The most common was focused on civic engagement (36%), followed by youth engagement (27%), and education (24%). An additional 9% of respondents conducted gender equality and social inclusion projects and 3% on professional skills.³

² The one respondent from the MEPI Women’s Business Internship conducted a community project.

³ Percentages are based on 19 responses in which multiple options could be selected.

Type of Community Project Conducted



Note: Data based on 19 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 provided an estimate of how many people they believe benefited from their projects. According to responses, more than 16,000 individuals were positively impacted by respondents’ community projects. One respondent reported their project benefited 9,000 individuals while another reported 5,000. However, the remaining ten respondents had an average of about 290 beneficiaries each.

The impact of these projects can be further understood through respondents’ accounts of their greatest success or result. One respondent was able to establish their own NGO called “Pink Steps” to support “breast cancer survivors in Lebanon.” Another respondent created an education manual to help individuals “understand the technicalities and practicalities of voting in Lebanon.”

Many respondents have been able to make an impact in their communities and experience success in their projects. This ability has been strengthened by participation in their MEPI program and the MEPI Alumni Connection. Among respondents who conducted a community project, 45% (9/20) collaborated with someone they met through their MEPI program or the alumni network. These partnerships indicate that the MEPI program and the alumni network have been beneficial in fostering partnerships and collaborations among respondents.



“I was recognized on Forbes 30 Under 30 Middle East for my social entrepreneurship impact on our Lebanese community. As I am committed to my academic career in cancer research, I am also a keen activist in cancer control and prevention. Through a generous grant funded by the United States Department of State...I was awarded the Fulbright Alumni Community Action Grant, where I founded my NGO, “Pink Steps” in 2015. Pink Steps is a health exercise support group for breast cancer survivors in Lebanon that aims to promote physical fitness and a healthy lifestyle in breast cancer survivors.”

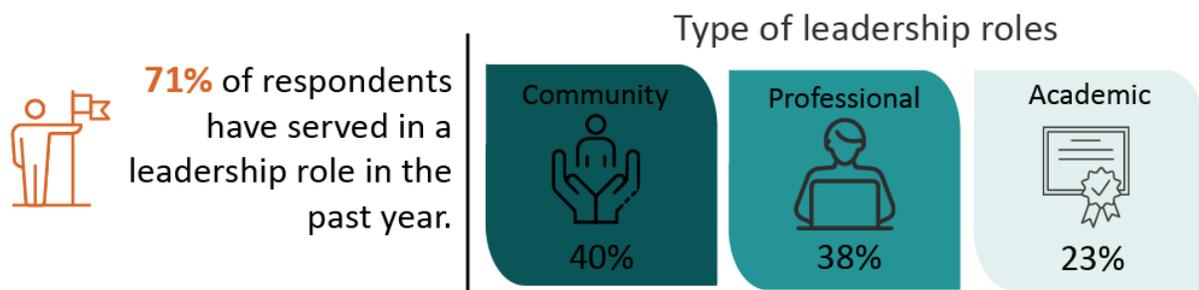
“[MEPI] allowed me to develop my civic action plan and transform it into a manual that helps people understand the technicalities and practicalities of voting in Lebanon especially after the new 2018 elections law...I used my NGO, the Leadership for Sustainable Development, as an outlet to give trainings in two Lebanese villages...the result of my training was...an 80% voting turnout in these two villages...This proved that my manual and trainings helped people understand the new electoral law better and vote accordingly.”



Leadership

Respondents have also impacted their communities by serving in leadership roles. Of 41 respondents, 71% (29/41) have served in a leadership role within the past year. Those who have served in leadership are more likely to be female. Among females, 74% (17/23) have served in a leadership role compared to 67% (12/18) of males. However, younger respondents and older respondents served in leadership roles at similar rates, 69% (18/26) and 69% (9/13), respectively. Among MEPI programs, 78% (14/18) of respondents from the Student Leaders Program served in a leadership role compared to 70% (7/10) of those from the Leadership Development Fellowship and 62% (8/13) of the Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship Program.

Among respondents who served in a leadership role, 40% were in a community setting, 38% in a professional setting, and 23% in an academic setting.⁴ A community setting was the most common leadership role among males (44%), while a professional setting was most common among females (43%).⁵



Note: Percentages for type of leadership roles are based 29 respondents who could select multiple options.

In addition to serving in leadership roles, respondents have used their skills and leadership to help people in their communities through mentorships, activities, and media. One respondent said they “participated in an entrepreneurship competition for Syrian refugees as a mentor for six contestants, of which one won the 1st runner-up award.” Other respondents noted their community activities, including “[helping] public school students in Lebanon pass their official tests,” “actively volunteering and trying to do relief and community service projects and initiatives,” and “[supporting] and [encouraging] people in [their] community.” Other respondents have used media to raise awareness and influence others. One respondent mentioned, “through my work in the media, I was able to impact many people in my community. I talk about issues that interest people and that enlightens them at the same time.”



“I have become a social media influencer, and I am now capable of bringing my voice out to the people. Things I post reach tens of thousands of people and the things I share spread like wildfire in my country. I have seen things [that] I share end up causing political action at [the] government and society level.”

⁴ Percentages based on 29 respondents who served in a leadership setting and could select multiple options.

⁵ Percentages based on 12 males and 17 females who served in a leadership setting and could select multiple options.

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, networking events and the Summit had the highest participation. Additionally, respondents said they did not participate in any alumni activities because they were not invited or did not have any time to attend.

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 been able to conduct numerous events and activities to promote specific issues and awareness. 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 41 respondents, 61% (25/41) participated in networking or professional development opportunities through the MEPI Alumni Connection within the past two years. The participation rate is fairly even among males and females as well as among younger and older respondents.



61% of respondents participated in networking or professional development opportunities through the MEPI Alumni Connection.

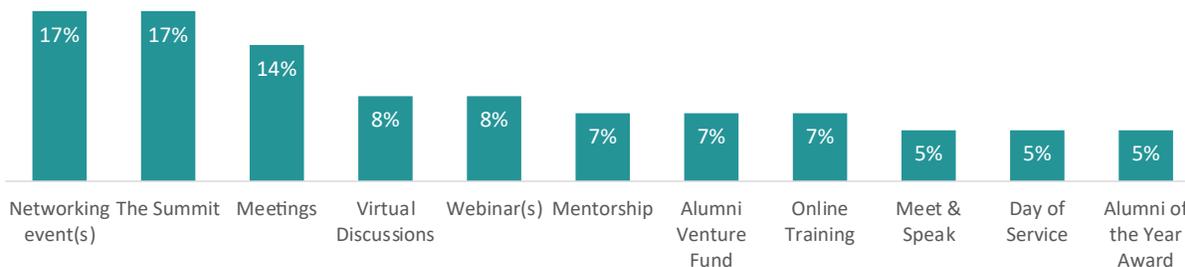
The MEPI Alumni Connection offers numerous types of networking and professional development opportunities to appeal to diverse alumni. These opportunities include networking events, the Summit, meetings, virtual discussions, webinars, mentorship, the Alumni Venture Fund, online training, opportunities to meet and speak, the MEPI Day of Service, and the Alumni of the Year Award. The activities with the highest participation were networking events (17%) and the Summit (17%). The activities with the subsequent highest participation were meetings (14%), virtual discussions (8%), and webinars (8%).⁶ However, there are some differences in participation across gender and MEPI program. The highest participation among males were meetings (26%), while the Summit had the highest participation among females (19%). Among MEPI programs, meetings had the highest participation among respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship (24%), and the Summit was highest among respondents from the

⁶ Percentages are based on 25 respondents who participated in networking/professional development opportunities, in which multiple options could be selected.

Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship Program (36%). Additionally, respondents from the Student Leaders Program had the highest participation among networking events (16%) and the Summit (16%).⁷

Of 41 respondents, 39% (16/41) said they did not participate in any networking or professional development opportunities through the MEPI Alumni Connection. They were then asked to respond as to

Participation in networking and professional development opportunities



Note: Data based on 25 respondents who indicated 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.

their primary reason for not participating. Of 16 respondents, 38% (6/16) said they were not invited to any MEPI alumni networking events and 38% (6/16) said they did not have time to attend. Additionally, 19% (3/16) said it was too difficult for them to travel and 6% (1/16) said they were not interested in the topic of any MEPI alumni events.

Impact of Alumni Engagement

Survey responses indicate that respondents' engagement with alumni activities has led to numerous positive outcomes, including new partnerships and projects. 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, 74% (28/38) of respondents have built relationships with new alumni. Additionally, among respondents who made new relationships, 54% (15/28) have built relationships with more than five 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% (11/38) 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, 22% (5/23) have collaborated with other alumni, while 38% (5/13) of older respondents have. Additionally, respondents have collaborated with civil society organizations to conduct events that promote specific issues and awareness. In the past two years, 156 events and activities were led by 27 respondents. Of the 156 events, 31% were conducted by 11 males and 16 females conducted 69%. Additionally, 51% were conducted by seven respondents from the Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship Program, 26% by seven respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship, and 23% by 13 respondents from the Student Leaders Program.

⁷ Percentages are based on 11 male respondents, 14 female respondents, 6 respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship, 12 from the Student Leaders Program, and 7 from the Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship Program. Multiple options could be selected.



156 events and activities were led by **27** 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. This support includes the Alumni Venture Fund, the MEPI Day of Service, partnerships with MEPI alumni, and mentorships. Among respondents who conducted a community project, 14% (3/21) report having received at least one form of support from the MEPI Alumni Connection. Among the three respondents who report receiving support, one received support through the MEPI Day of Service, one through mentorship, and one through the Alumni Venture Fund 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 38 respondents, 89% (34/38) said they have shared what they learned through a MEPI alumni activity (event, training, partnership, etc.) with others. A higher percentage of younger respondents shared what they learned compared to older respondents, 96% (22/23) and 77% (10/13), respectively. Among respondents who said they had shared what they learned, 27% have done so in-person, 19% on social media, 17% with family, 15% with colleagues, 10% with other MEPI alumni, 9% online, and 2% in a publication.⁸ Therefore, MEPI alumni activities likely benefit alumni and their colleagues, friends, and family.

D. MEPI Alumni Interests

Overall, respondents felt comfortable and secure when participating in MEPI Alumni Connection activities. Additionally, they thought 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, 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 or evening hours. Additionally, respondents noted that they would like to develop skills in advocacy and stakeholder engagement, NGO management, conflict resolution, and small business development. In terms of support, respondents indicated that the most helpful form of financial support would be grants. The most helpful form of non-financial support would be having a partner or partners.

Alumni Needs

The majority of respondents, 69% (22/32), 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 33 respondents, 64% (21/33) reported that they always felt secure and 30% (10/33) often felt secure. However, two respondents (6%) reported they infrequently or rarely felt secure.

⁸ Percentages are based on 34 responses in which multiple options could be selected.

Do respondents feel secure participating in MEPI Alumni Connection activities?



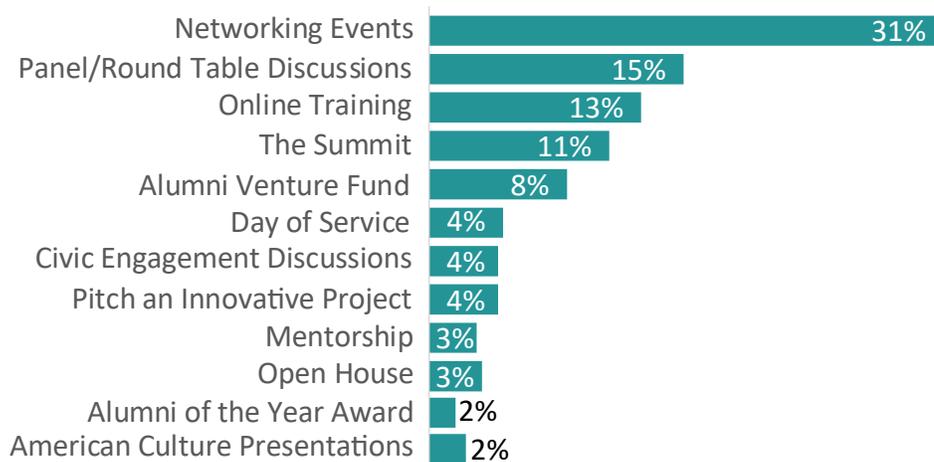
Note: Data based on 33 respondents.

Opportunities to Further Strengthen and Grow the MEPI Alumni Connection

There are several opportunities for the MEPI Alumni Connection to continue and further strengthen its support for alumni. 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 beneficial financial and non-financial support they would like to receive.

Respondents stated that the activity they would most like to see implemented were networking events (31%), such as networking events with diplomats and professionals. The next most desired activities were panel and round table discussions (15%) and online events (13%), including online training, webinars, and virtual discussions. Additional activities respondents would like included the Summit (11%), the Alumni Venture Fund (8%), the MEPI Day of Service (4%), civic engagement discussions (4%), and the opportunity to pitch an innovative project (4%).⁹

Respondents' Desired Activities



Note: Data based on 49 responses in which multiple options could be selected.

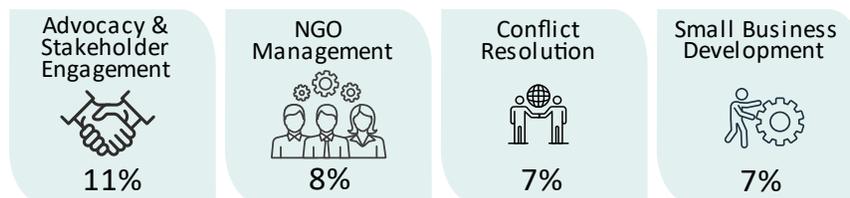
The most common responses regarding the format of events/training preferred by respondents were online events during weekends (18%) and online events during evening hours (18%). Other responses included 2-4-day intensive training (17%), in-person events during weekends (16%), in-person events during evening hours (10%), and one-day training (10%). An additional 8% of respondents said they preferred in-person events during work hours and 3% said online events during work hours.¹⁰

⁹ Data based on 49 responses in which multiple options could be selected.

¹⁰ Data based on 50 responses in which multiple option could be selected.

Respondents were also asked to select the skills they would like to develop to advance their community and professional leadership. Among all respondents, the skills most preferred were advocacy and stakeholder engagement (11%), NGO management (8%), conflict resolution (7%), and small business development (7%). There are some differences in preferences across gender and MEPI program. Males indicated the skill they would most like to develop was advocacy and stakeholder engagement (13%), while females said NGO management (11%). Additionally, advocacy and stakeholder engagement was the top selected skill among respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship (15%) and the Student Leaders Program (13%). However, leadership development (10%) and technology/entrepreneurship (10%) were the most preferred skills among respondents from the Tomorrow’s Leaders Scholarship Program.¹¹

Top skills respondents would like to develop



Note: Data based on 51 responses in which respondents could select multiple options to the question.

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 launch and/or improve new projects. Respondents indicated that the most beneficial financial resource would be a grant (42%). An additional 25% of respondents said a donation, and 14% said an investment would help them feel prepared. Instead of choosing a specific resource, 13% of respondents said that all financial resources would be helpful (i.e., grant, investment, donation, and loan) and 4% said a loan. Additionally, 2% of respondents said no financial resources were needed.

Respondents indicated that the most beneficial non-financial resource would be having a partner or partners (26%), followed by a professional mentor (25%), and access to alumni or professionals with relevant experience (24%). Other responses for helpful non-financial resources included access to in-person training (13%) and access to online training (12%). These results suggest that partnerships and professional collaborations may help respondents feel more prepared to launch an initiative than formal training.¹²

Respondents’ desired financial resources



Note: Data based on 51 responses in which multiple options could be selected.

¹¹ Data based on 51 respondents. This consisted of 23 males, 28 females, 13 respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship, 21 from the Student Leaders Program, and 16 from the Tomorrow’s Leaders Scholarship Program. Multiple options could be selected.

¹² Data for financial resources is based on 51 responses and data for non-financial resources is based on 50 responses.

Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to provide any other suggestions to the MEPI Alumni Connection. Respondents noted they would like “more networking events and trainings,” “job opportunities and connections with international organizations,” and “financing.” Additionally, respondents felt that additional support through “funds” would help them “implement [their] projects in the field” and help them reach their potential as leaders.

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 the lives of respondents by helping them grow their network, increase their motivation for public service, and enhance their self-confidence. MEPI has also improved respondents’ ability to impact their communities as it has provided a supportive network, resources, and funding. Moreover, MEPI has helped respondents develop new skills and a broader perspective.

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. They have also applied their skills, gained from MEPI, while working in various positions. Respondents have conducted community projects predominantly in civic engagement and youth engagement. Some of these projects have also grown into NGOs and respondents noted considerable achievements in raising awareness and influencing behavior. Moreover, respondents have impacted their communities by serving in various leadership roles and influencing others through social media.

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 networking events and the Summit. Respondents’ engagement and participation in these activities have led to a number of beneficial outcomes, including collaborations and partnerships with other MEPI alumni and civil society organizations.

Overall, respondents indicated that they 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 more networking events and roundtable or panel discussions. The format of events and training most preferred by respondents were online events during weekends or evening hours. Additionally, respondents would like to develop skills in advocacy and stakeholder engagement, NGO management, conflict resolution, and small business development. To further support alumni’s ability to improve or launch new projects, respondents said grants would be the most beneficial financial resource. Having a partner or partners would be the most beneficial non-financial resource.

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