

# MEPI Alumni Connection

## رابطة خريجي ميبي



MEPI



2020 MEPI Alumni Survey

Tomorrow's Leaders Program Alumni Report



## **Acknowledgments**

The 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. Heesu Chung conducted analysis and drafted this document with input from the program team.

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## MEPI Alumni Connection

رابطة خريجي ميبي



## 2020 MEPI Alumni Survey: Tomorrow's Leaders Alumni Highlights

In total,

**84** respondents

from 2008 to 2020  
(program completion years)



### Respondent Profile

#### Gender



#### Age



#### Host Institution



#### Citizenship

From **12 MENA Countries**



### Respondents' Impact on Communities

**23** TL Alumni



**3500+** beneficiaries reached

### Community Projects by Sectors



### Leadership

**64%** Served in leadership roles in the past year



### Number of Leadership Roles Served by Leadership Type



### Impact of MEPI on the TL Alumni

Q. How has MEPI helped you develop your ability to make an impact in your community?

Developed character, knowledge, and/or skills related to:



**11**

Community Engagement

Developed soft skills:



**14**

Leadership



**8**

Networking



**6**

Critical Thinking



**5**

Communication



**2**

Decision-making



**2**

Empathy



**5**

Other Professional Skills

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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 since 2003 of MEPI leadership programs including the Student Leaders Program, Tomorrow's Leaders Program, Leadership Development Fellowship (LDF), previously the Leaders for Democracy Fellowship. The MEPI Alumni Connection offers a variety of activities to meet the needs of the alumni by promoting community and business leadership through alumni engagement in countries in the MENA region including Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen.

This report presents and analyzes the 2020 MEPI alumni survey results from the alumni respondents of the Tomorrow's Leaders (TL) Scholarship program. The TL program provides four-year university enrollment and internship opportunities at select institutions of higher learning in the Middle East, namely Lebanese American University, American University of Beirut, and American University of Cairo. The primary objective of MEPI's Tomorrow's Leaders program is to build a cadre of university-age leaders who are civic-minded, intellectually able, and professionally skilled; and who will become community, business, and national leaders in the future.

## II. Methodology and Limitations

In 2020, the MEPI Alumni Connection team surveyed alumni of all years (2003-2020) of MEPI leadership programs to gain a better understanding of 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 Program. The survey is conducted biennially, with an initial Needs Assessment having been conducted in 2018.

In July-September 2020 an online survey with up to 64 questions<sup>1</sup> provided in both English and Arabic was distributed to all MEPI leadership alumni with contact information in the MEPI Alumni Connection database. 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; the reach of MEPI programming and alumni in MENA.

Responses were collected using Survey Monkey. The survey was distributed initially to a representative group of 20% of the alumni to test the effectiveness of the collector over the course of a week. Fewer questions were subsequently marked as required as well as the question order adjusted to encourage increased responsiveness to the end of the survey before distribution to the other 80% of alumni. Alumni that had not completed the survey received reminders approximately weekly via SurveyMonkey. Alumni were encouraged by IREX, MEPI, US Embassies and other MEPI leadership program stakeholders via program platforms and activities to complete the survey. Team members called a selection of alumni from diverse programs and

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<sup>1</sup> Some questions were only introduced if relevant to a previous response. In addition, to encourage participation, responses were not required to all questions.

countries who had not responded to the survey to encourage them to do so. 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). Prior to analysis, responses were cleaned of duplicates and any response from individuals not eligible for the MEPI Alumni Connection, for a total 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 the questions were uneven and low for many of the questions. All percentages utilized in this report, therefore, are calculated as percentage (%) of total respondents for each corresponding question.

Responses from the Tomorrow’s Leaders alumni represent 39% (84/214) of the eligible TL alumni from with contact information in the MEPI Alumni Connection database at the time of the survey and all eligible graduation years (2008-2020).

### III. Results

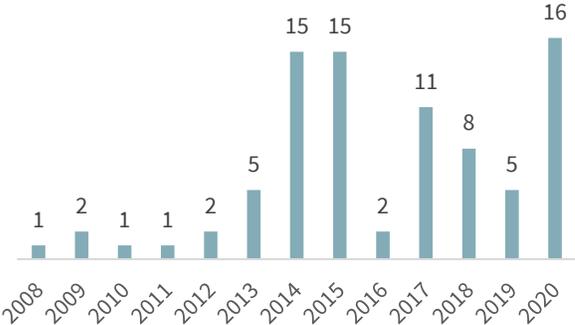
#### A. Respondent Profile

A total of 84 TL alumni responded to this survey.

The vast majority (86%) of respondents are those who completed the TL program in the past seven years (2014-2020).

Three institutions hosted TL program participants with Lebanese American University (LAU) having the highest number of respondents at 45% (32/71), followed by American University of Beirut (AUB) at 30% (21/71), and American University of Cairo (AUC) at 25% (18/71).

Number of TL Alumni Respondents by MEPI Program Completion Year



#### Host Institution



#### Gender



There are slightly more respondents identifying as female at 55% (45/81) than male at 43% (35/81). Notably, in Bahrain, all 7 respondents were female.

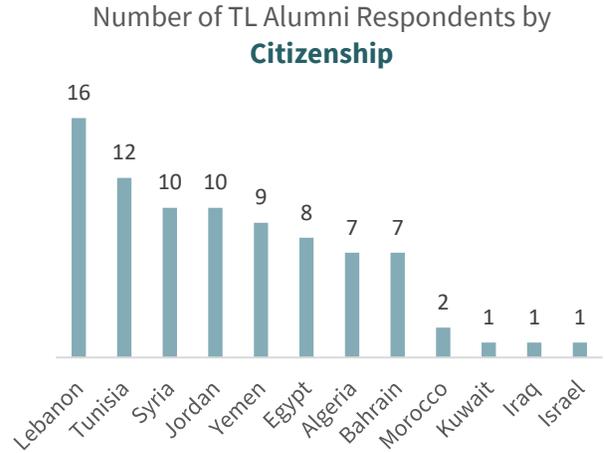
Most respondents are in their 20s—with 36% (27/74) from the age 20-24 group and 57% (42/74) from the age 25-29 group—and only 7% (5/74) are in their 30s. This is reflective of the fact that the Tomorrow’s Leaders Program is for undergraduates, therefore the alumni until now tend to be relatively young.

## Citizenship & Place of Residence

The TL alumni respondents represented most of MEPI Alumni Connection eligible MENA countries, except for Qatar and Saudi Arabia, with the greatest number of respondents from Lebanon at 19% (16/84), followed by Tunisia at 14% (12/84), Syria at 12% (10/84), and Jordan at 12% (10/84) in terms of citizenship.

The respondents' current or primary country of residence were much more varied, expanding to other continents including North America and Europe, illustrating that not everyone resided in their country of citizenship, with a sizeable number living in the US. Countries of residence include Lebanon at 24%

(14/59), Egypt at 12% (7/59), United States at 8% (5/59), Tunisia at 7% (4/59), Bahrain at 7% (4/59), Jordan at 7% (4/59), Yemen at 5% (3/59), Algeria at 5% (3/59), Canada at 3% (2/59), United Kingdom at 3% (2/59), United Arab Emirates at 3% (2/59) and one respondent each residing in Germany, Syria, Iraq, Central African Republic, Israel, Morocco, Netherlands, Qatar, and Sweden respectively.



## B. Impact of MEPI

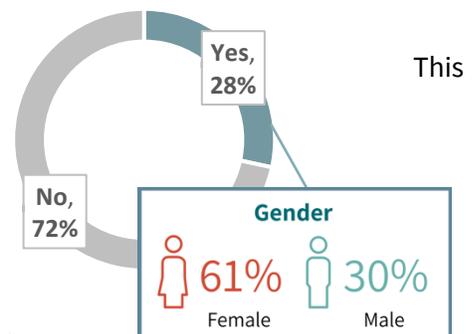
### 1. WHAT HAVE THE TL ALUMNI DONE AFTER THEIR MEPI PROGRAM

Overall, the alumni of the TL program reported becoming better leaders in their communities after their MEPI program participation.

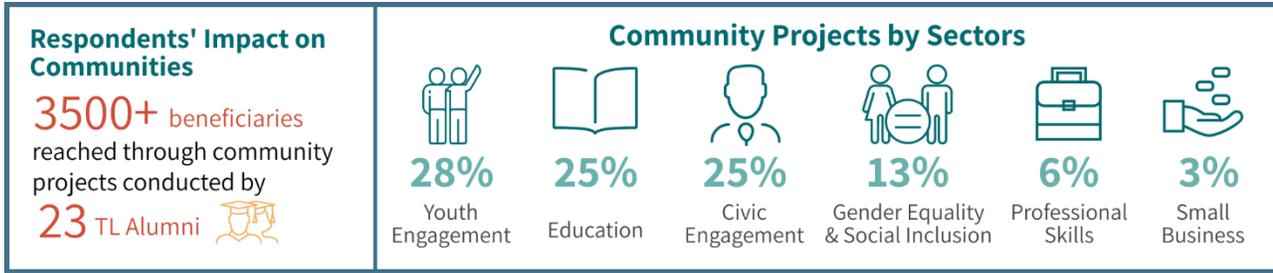
#### 1.1 COMMUNITY PROJECTS

More than a quarter, 28% (23/81), of respondents said they conducted a project in their community in the past two years. This includes eight respondents from Tunisia and four from Lebanon, among others. More females, at 61% (14/23), conducted a project in their communities, which is greater than the overall percentage of female respondents (56%). Through their projects, the alumni respondents report having reached about 3540 beneficiaries in total, with the number of beneficiaries reached per alumni ranging from approximately 10 to 2000 people.

#### Conducted Community Project

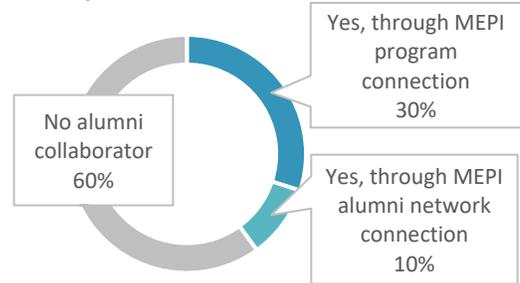


Among those who started a project in the last two years, more than a quarter (28%) conducted a project on youth engagement, followed by projects on education (25%) and civic engagement (22%).



Almost a third, or 30% (6/20) of those who responded saying that they started a project in the last two years collaborated with someone they met through their MEPI leadership program, and 10% (2/20) collaborated with someone they met through the MEPI alumni network. This highlights how MEPI programs strengthens network, which can support community involvement.

**Project Collaboration**



While many (6/20) respondents highlighted lack of sufficient financial and human resources as the main challenge faced when setting up their projects or meeting their project goals, the respondents highlighted a wide range of success achieved through their projects:

*Q. What is the great success or result of your project?*

“Producing more than 70 educational videos [with] more than 200,000 views, [and] producing more than 50 podcasts [with] more than 100,000 listeners”

“We have managed to put Yemeni coffee back on the international market and managed to give jobs to Yemenis stranded in Egypt.”

“The willingness and acceptance of my Jewish employer to allow me to speak freely [on the Arab Community] and my Jewish colleagues who were intrigued and sought to learn and discuss our reality in an inclusive manner - something they have passed on to their families and respective communities.”

“I was recognized on Forbes 30 Under 30 Middle East for my social entrepreneurship impact on our Lebanese community.... Through a generous grant funded by the U.S. Department of State ... I founded my NGO “Pink Steps” in 2015. Pink Steps is a health exercise support group for breast cancer survivors in Lebanon.”

## 1.2 LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

Many of the alumni respondents indicated serving in leadership roles, with 64% (46/72) of respondents having served in a leadership role in the past year. Of note is that, 71% of female respondents (27/38) served in leadership roles and 53% of males (16/30), meaning more females served as leaders both in number and proportion. Most who served as leaders are in their 20s (with 38 out of 62 having responded yes), while only one respondent (out of 4 who responded) is in their 30s.

**64%** Served in leadership roles in the past year



Among those who indicated serving in leadership roles, 32 roles were in professional settings, 21 were in community settings, and 14 were in academic settings; the responses are not mutually exclusive of each other as the question allowed for multiple selections.

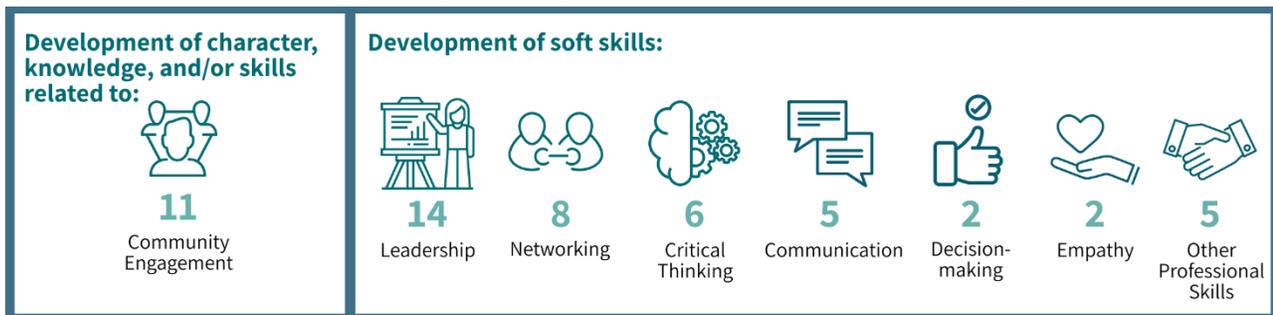
Respondents also showed initiative by forming new businesses and organizations. 11% (9/83) of respondents (two females, six males) indicated starting their own business (for-profit) or organization (non-profit/non-governmental) after their experience with MEPI. They include two respondents from Algeria, two from Jordan, two from Lebanon, one from Syria, one from Tunisia, and one from Yemen. In addition, among them one partnered with a global institution, one with a local institution, one with a MEPI alumni, and one with an individual.



## 2. WHAT WAS THE IMPACT OF MEPI ON THE ALUMNI

When asked about how MEPI helped develop their ability to make an impact in their community via an open-ended question format, many respondents highlighted a wide range of benefits. These include, most notably, the development of various soft skills and the development of their character, knowledge, and/or skills that helped them better engage with their communities (11 mentions). The top soft skills highlighted were leadership (14 mentions), networking (8), critical thinking (6), communication, including public speaking (5), decision-making (2), empathy (2), and other professional skills (5). In addition, respondents said it stimulated self-reflection (2) and global perspectives (2).

*Q. How has MEPI helped you develop your ability to make an impact in your community?*



“MEPI helped me develop my soft skills significantly. I am comfortable in public speaking, thanks to MEPI, decision making and leadership, and formal communication.... Through these skills, I was able to deliver educational content while interning as a workshop presenter with the U. S. ACCESS program in Batna, Algeria, and motivated and helped students understand... their role in community development and civic engagement.”

“Perspective is paramount when looking to resolve an issue or create communal change. MEPI's strongest asset lies in its network..., being able to reach out to fellow MEPI's opinions, expertise. There's a positive ripple effect, when watching others grow their initiatives.”  
- Anonymous TL alum

“MEPI succeeded at ingraining a culture of ‘I care’ and ‘I shouldn't wait for others to do it’ in me and my peers. Through caring for the community, I can now spot opportunities for improvements.”

“It has shaped my personality, built my resilience and widened by horizon. My exposure to different cultures and different subjects of studies have enhanced my mental capacity to adapt to situations and comprehend complex issues.”

Similarly, when asked about how MEPI changed their life, many respondents highlighted that it gave them a global perspective and widened their understanding of the world – from culture to politics (mentioned 11 times), provided them with critical academic opportunities (9), empowered them to take action (5), instilled a sense of camaraderie among program participants (3), allowed for self-reflection (3), enhanced their networks (3) and helped develop a similar set of soft skills as those mentioned in the previous question and including conflict resolution (3) and communication (3). In total, 44 alumni responded that the MEPI program was indeed life changing. This was representative of graduates of all three placement universities, with 15 respondents placed with LAU, 13 at AUB, and 12 at AUC.

*Q. Many alumni say that MEPI was a life-changing experience. How, if at all, did MEPI change your life?*



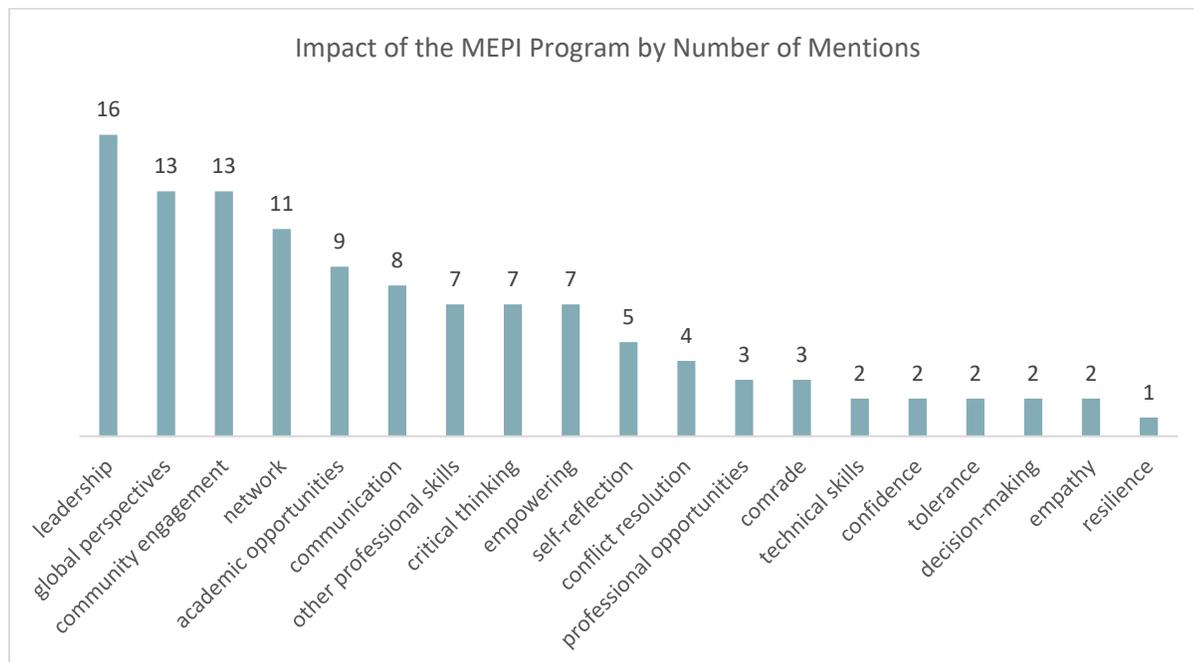
“MEPI provided us with the exposure that was needed to break all boundaries between countries and cultures. If anything, it taught us the power to change, accept, and understand others who come from different backgrounds. It taught us the importance of respect and perseverance in order to achieve our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

“MEPI has completely changed my life. First, I was able to fund my education, something I did not believe was possible for me in my economic situation at the time. Also, I was given a once in a lifetime opportunity to be exposed to the Arab world, something that Israeli Arabs do not have the privilege to do as much. Also, MEPI helped me find education in the US [...] and for that I am forever grateful!”

“First, it allowed me to receive the best educational resources while all the conditions in my country couldn't allow so. Then, it equipped me with the skills that enabled me to start fighting for my rights despite all the circumstances. Finally, it 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 [...] for a better future.”

“[...] 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.”

The figure below details the overall impact of MEPI program by summarizing the results of both questions— *How has MEPI helped you develop your ability to make an impact in your community?* and *Many alumni say that MEPI was a life-changing experience. How, if at all, did MEPI change your life?*

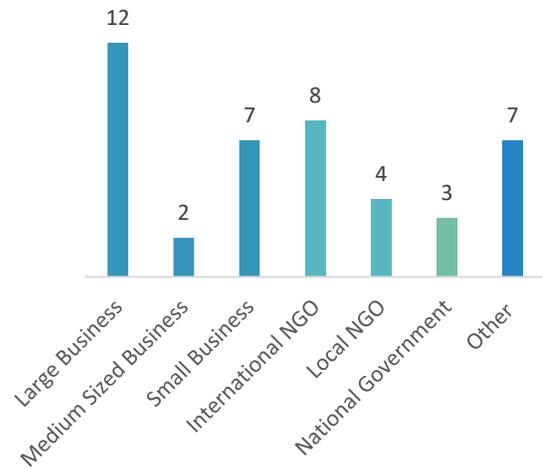


**EMPLOYMENT**

More than half of the respondents, 57% (48/84), indicated that they are currently employed. Employment is higher among male respondents with 66% (23/35) of male respondents reporting that they are employed while 53% (24/45) of female respondents report being employed. Out of all those employed, 31% (15/48) hold entry level positions, 58% (28/48) hold mid-level positions, and 10% (5/48) hold executive level positions.

The majority of respondents work in businesses<sup>2</sup> (21), followed by international NGOs (8), other (7), local NGOs (4), and national government (3). The job industries include religious/civic engagement/grant making industry (8), warehousing information (7), public administration/government (6), education services (5), healthcare and social assistance (4), finance/insurance/real estate/trade (3), management of enterprises (3), scientific research (2), technical services (2), transportation (1), construction/manufacturing/trade (1), arts & entertainment/recreation (1), food services (1), and mining/quarrying/oil & gas (1).

Employment by Organization Type

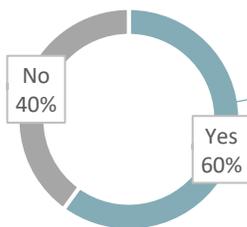


**C. Impact of MEPI Alumni Connection Program**

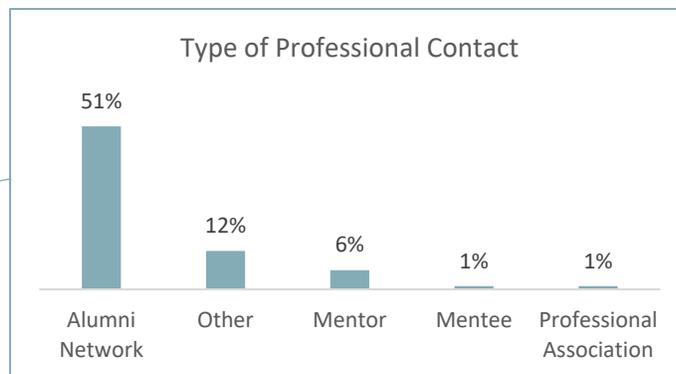
**1. WHAT WERE ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT EXPERIENCES LIKE**

Respondents overall displayed high levels of engagement with other MEPI alumni. 60% (48/68) of the respondents indicated that they had some sort of professional contact with MEPI alumni, with 51% (35/68) of respondents having contact through the alumni network, which is the highest category for both males and females, 6% (4/68) serving as mentors, 1% (1/68) serving as a mentee, 1% (1/68) through professional association, and 12% (8/68) through other means.

Professional Contact with MEPI Alumni



Type of Professional Contact

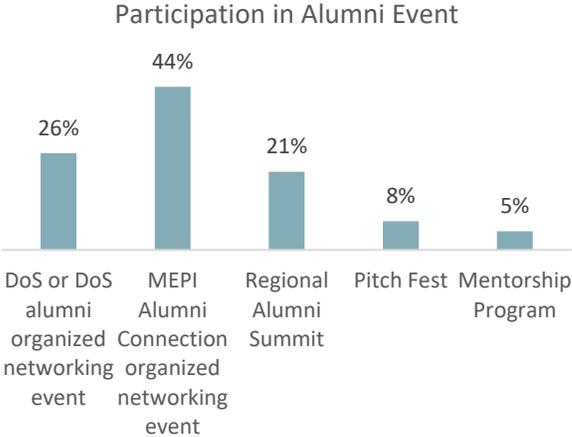


<sup>2</sup> Large business is defined as those with 201+ employees, medium sized business defined as 51-200 employees, and small business defined as up to 50 employees.

With regards to overall Department of State alumni events, 26% (17/66) of the respondents participated in networking or professional development activities organized by DoS or DoS alumni in the past two years. These include 13 respondents in their 20s. None of the participants (out of 4 respondents) were in their 30s. 11 of the participants identified as females, 5 identified as males, showing much higher female attendance.

Regarding MEPI Alumni Connection activities specifically, 44% (32/73) of the respondents participated in networking or professional development opportunities through the MEPI Alumni Connection. 21% (15/73) of the respondents participated in the 2019 Regional Alumni Summit; among those who participated, 27% (4/15) subsequently collaborated with alumni from the summit and 7% (1/15) collaborated with an organization from the summit. 8% (1/13) participated in the Pitch Fest at the Summit and reported having received technical support to implement the project that she pitched. Additionally, 5% (3/56) participated in the mentorship program; two as mentors and one as a mentee.

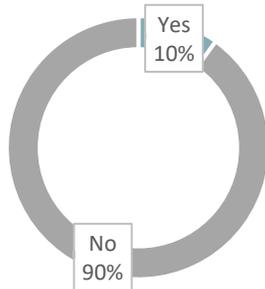
Among those who answered that they didn't participate in any alumni activities, the top reason (27/49) they selected was "I was not invited to any MEPI Alumni networking events during the past year," although 16 of those are alumni who just completed the MEPI program this year in 2020 and therefore would not have been invited as alumni. This may be indicative that some alumni are not receiving information about these events or that no events were organized in their country of residence during the past year. This was followed by "I did not have time to attend any MEPI Alumni networking events during the past year" as selected by nine alumni and "It was too difficult for me to travel to any MEPI Alumni events during the past year" as selected by seven alumni. Only three selected "I was not interested in the topic of any MEPI Alumni events during the past year."



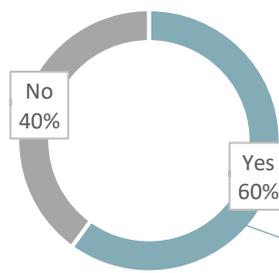
**2. WHAT WERE THE IMPACTS OF THE ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT EXPERIENCES?**

A sizeable, but not large, portion of these engagements led to collaborations with a MEPI or DoS alumni: 10% (7/67) of the respondents indicated that they collaborated with a MEPI or DoS alumni on a project, initiative, or business idea in the past two years. A much larger portion collaborated with CSOs: 60% (37/62) of the respondents organized a total of 184 events and/or activities in collaboration with CSOs to promote specific issues and awareness during the past two years, with an average of three events organized by each respondent. Among them, there were more female-led events, with a nearly even distribution among age groups: 50% of those in the 25-29 age group; about 40% of those in the 20-24 age group; 40% of those in 30-39 age group led at least one event with CSOs.

Collaborated with a MEPI/DoS Alumni on a Project/Initiative/Business Idea



Collaborated with CSOs to promote specific issues and awareness



Total of **184** events/activities organized with CSOs

When asked, “Did you get support on your [community] project from MEPI Alumni Connection Program?” only two people (both male) answered that they got support through the Alumni Venture Fund, and one person answered he got support through the mentorship program.<sup>3</sup> The low numbers may have been due to unclear question wording, specifically lack of clarity around what qualifies as “support,” as only 13 responded though 23 indicated that they conducted a project. Other possible explanations are low awareness of available resources, perceived barriers to access as few people applied for the small grants (Alumni Venture Fund) in general, although all MEPI alumni are eligible to apply, or simply low interest in and/or need for the aforementioned resources. For example, rather than receiving her funding from MEPI, one respondent received funding from elsewhere.

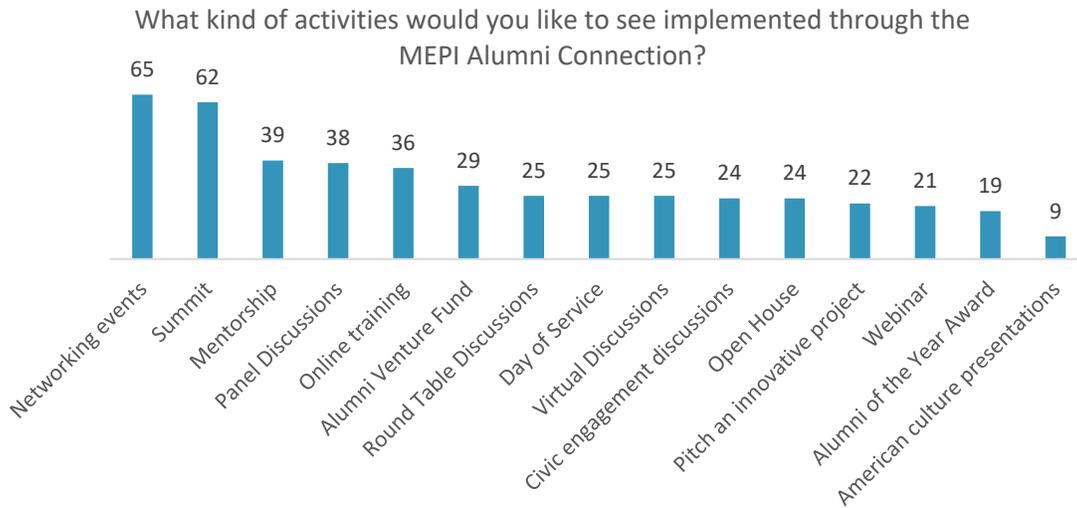
In addition to collaboration, MEPI alumni outreach allowed participants to learn about relevant professional opportunities. For instance, one alum stated that thanks to monthly MEPI alumni opportunity postings, “I have been selected as a woman deliver young leader fellow, and I was [shortlisted] as a candidate for USIP Generation Change Fellows Exchange with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.” The impacts of the alumni activities are likely to be much larger, as 73% of respondents indicated that they shared what they learned through a MEPI alumni activity with others, mainly with colleagues (41) and family (27).

## D. MEPI Alumni Interests

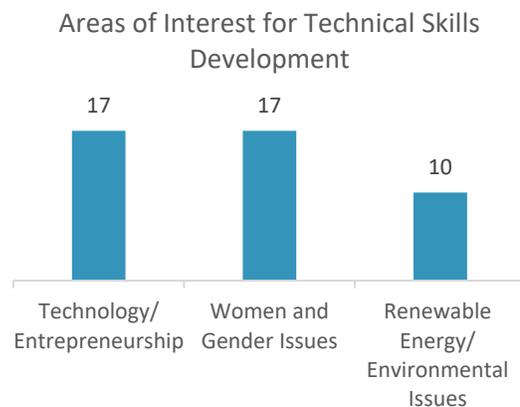
### 1. WHAT ACTIVITIES DO THE TL ALUMNI WANT THROUGH THE MEPI ALUMNI CONNECTION

The respondents displayed a high interest in networking events (with both professionals and diplomats), a summit, mentorship, panel discussions, and online training, among many:

<sup>3</sup> All respondents were given the following answer options for this question: Yes/No, and if yes, please select 1) MEPI Day of Service, 2) Alumni Venture Fund, 3) Mentorship, 4) PitchFest coaching, 5) Partnership with MEPI alum, 6) Training or resources, 7) Other.



In terms of the skills that the respondents would like to further develop to advance their community and professional leadership<sup>4</sup>, the respondents had many and varied interests including: developing project management skills (22), advocacy and stakeholder engagement skills (19), developing public-private partnerships (18), conflict resolution skills (17), decision-making skills (17), research skills (17), NGO management (17), small business development skills (15), negotiation skills (15), and leadership development skills (12). Among areas for technical skills-development, respondents were most interested in technology/entrepreneurship (17), women and gender issues (17), and renewable energy/environmental issues (10). Other interest areas suggested were policy evaluation/impact assessment and education for development. Over half (55%) of the alumni respondents said that MEPI Alumni Connection offers resources appropriate and relevant to their current professional or academic level.



As for the format of events or trainings that most interests the TL alumni, respondents indicated that they preferred online events to in-person ones. In addition, they preferred weekend hours (40) or evenings (39), with a low preference for during work hours (12), for either online or in-person events (35/26/11). The respondents also indicated a preference for longer (2-4 day) intensive trainings (38) compared to shorter (up to 1-day) trainings (28).

Most alumni respondents (71%, 40/56) feel always secure and comfortable participating in MEPI Alumni Connection activities, while 23% (13/56) feel often secure, and 5% (3/56) feel infrequently secure (which were all three female respondents).

<sup>4</sup> Respondents were asked to indicate their top three choices.

## **2. WHAT OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORT WOULD THE TL ALUMNI WANT TO GAIN THROUGH THE MEPI ALUMNI CONNECTION PROGRAM?**

Most respondents indicated desiring both financial and non-financial resources from the MEPI Alumni Connection Program. In terms of financial resources, respondents answered that grants (49), followed by investments (29), and donations (20) would most help them feel prepared to improve their projects or start new ones. When it comes to non-financial resources, the respondents answered that a professional mentor (63), followed by access to alumni or professionals with relevant experience (45), partner(s) (41), access to in-person training (32), and access to online training (24) would help them feel prepared to launch an initiative. Only 1 person indicated that career/business coaching would help them.

The majority (61%) of alumni respondents follow at least one MEPI social media page—the most popular being MEPI Alumni Facebook group (34), followed by MEPI Alumni LinkedIn Group (32), the MEPI official Facebook page (30), and the MEPI Instagram (19). On MEPI social media, respondents note wanting to see content on opportunities, including professional/jobs, training, volunteering, scholarships/grants/funds, as well as content on ongoing and successful community projects and opportunities to engage with other alumni.

## **IV. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Overall, MEPI's Tomorrow's Leaders (TL) Program and the MEPI Alumni Connection had significant impact on the participants and subsequently the larger communities.

In terms of the MEPI Alumni Connection, the program did a good job of meeting its goal to develop an active alumni network that fosters long-lasting relationships and opportunities to stimulate social and business entrepreneurship in the MENA region. Alumni connections remained strong following TL program participation with a large majority of respondents (60%) keeping in contact with a MEPI alumni. While the Alumni Connection Program led to few collaborations (10%) with other MEPI or Dos alumni on a project, initiative, or business idea, a large majority of respondents (60%) indicated collaborating with CSOs to promote specific issues.

The survey results show high demand for grants and networking with other professionals to help launch initiatives. In order to further support the alumni, the U.S. Department of State and the MEPI Alumni Connection Program, should continue to offer grants to support alumni's projects and entrepreneurial activities. In terms of activities, more networking events should be continued to be offered as they are greatest in demand.

While participation rate among MEPI alumni in the mentorship program was very low, with only one respondent indicating that he received support for this project through the mentorship program, yet there is a large demand for professional mentors and access to alumni or professionals with relevant experience. MEPI Alumni Connection Program should, therefore, focus on opportunities for alumni to network with and increase their access to professionals with relevant experience.

MEPI Alumni Connection should take extra steps to ensure that all program participants, especially women, feel safe while participating in program activities; in order to address the issue of a few participants reporting that they didn't always feel safe during the program, follow-up research will need to be done on why they didn't feel safe and what can be done to address the issue.

In terms of MEPI programming, responses and feedback from the TL alumni indicate that the TL program aligns very well the MEPI's mission of "fostering partnerships among citizens, civil society, the private sector, and government institutions to generate shared solutions that promote stability and prosperity in the Middle East and North Africa." Responses indicate that the Tomorrow's Leaders program has been particularly strong in fostering partnerships among citizens, civil society, and to a certain extent, private sector; it is unclear to what extent MENA government institutions were involved in projects led by TL alumni. Many (8) of the alumni-led community projects focused on "civic engagement" and, thereby participatory governance, which is one of the core objectives of the MEPI program. Economic opportunity, which is the other core objective of the MEPI program, was also tackled through various avenues: developing professional skills (57% of respondents indicated that they were employed), conducting project activities (one project directly resulted in more job opportunities for community members), and starting new businesses (nine new businesses/ organizations were formed by respondents).

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