

MEPI Alumni Connection

رابطة خريجي ميبي



2020 MEPI Alumni Survey

Syria Report



Acknowledgments

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

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

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

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2020 MEPI Alumni Survey: Syria

MEPI Alumni Connection

رابطة خريجي ميبى



Respondent Profile

23 respondents
from 2006 to 2020 (program completion years)



Age

20-29 years 52%
30+ 48%

Gender

Female 61% Male 39%



MEPI Program

43% Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship Program
35% Leadership Development Fellowship
22% Student Leaders Program

How was MEPI a life-changing experience?

Enabled Personal Growth



44%

Increased Access to Education



22%

Offered Inspiration & Encouragement



22%

Enabled Professional Growth



11%

Impact of MEPI

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

Developed New Skills

57%



Expanded Network

29%

Increased Self-Confidence



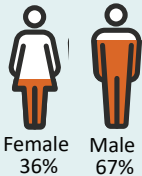
11%

Alumni Impact

Employment

Employment rate of respondents

48% of respondents are currently working.



Community Projects

Type of community project conducted

Gender Equality & Social Inclusion
38%

Youth Engagement
31%

Professional Skills
8%

Education
8%

Civic Engagement
8%

43% of respondents conducted at least one community project within the past two years.

Leadership

52% of respondents have served in a leadership role in the past year.

Community



54%

Professional



31%

Academic



15%

MEPI Alumni Interests

Desired Activities

Networking Events
34%

Online Training/ Discussions
9%

The Summit
9%

Roundtable/ Panel Discussions
8%

Top Skills Respondents Would Like to Develop

NGO Management
12%

Project Management
9%

Decision-Making
9%

Conflict Resolution
9%

Most helpful

Financial Resource



Grants

Non-Financial Resource



Professional Mentor

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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 Syria.

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.

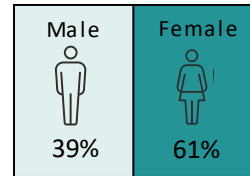
The survey was closed in September 2020 with a response rate of 30% (504/1663). Duplicates and any response from individuals not eligible for the MEPI Alumni Connection were removed for a total sample of 408 eligible responses. For analysis and reporting, the open-ended answers in Arabic were translated 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% (23/81) of all eligible alumni from Syria who had contact information available at the time of the survey.

III. Results

A. Respondent Profile

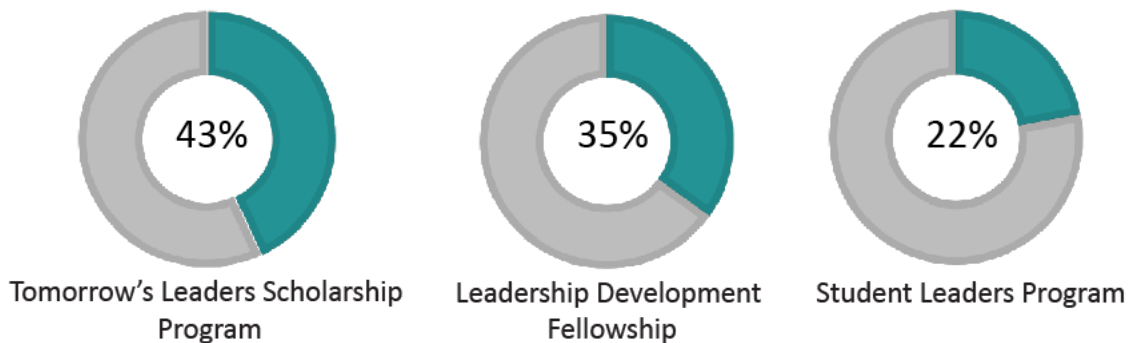
The survey includes 23 alumni respondents whose citizenship is Syria, making up approximately 6% (23/408) of the total sample of alumni respondents across all participating countries and programs. There is a higher representation of female respondents, 61% (14/23), than male respondents, 39% (9/23). Regarding age, 52% (11/21) of respondents are 20-29 years old, and 48% (10/21) are 30 years old or older.



Note: Data based on 23 respondents.

Across MEPI leadership programs, 43% (10/23) are alumni of the Tomorrow’s Leaders Scholarship Program, 35% (8/23) are alumni of the Leadership Development Fellowship, and 22% (5/23) are alumni of the Student Leaders Program.

MEPI Program



Note: Data based on 23 responses for gender and 49 for age.

Respondents’ completion year of their program ranges from 2006 – 2020, with no respondents from 2007, 2010, 2012, or 2015. About 17% (4/23) of respondents completed their program in 2006 – 2011 and 22% (5/23) completed their program in 2013-2017. However, the majority of respondents, 61% (14/23), completed their program in 2018, 2019, or 2020. All six respondents (26%) 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 23 respondents.

Findings also show that most of the respondents' current or primary country of residence is outside of Syria. Of 19 respondents, 21% (4/19) reported Syria as their current or primary country of residence and 79% (15/19) lived abroad. Among the fifteen respondents who noted their residence was outside of Syria, six said they resided in Lebanon and two in Turkey. There was also one respondent who resided in each of the following countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Kuwait, Sweden, and the United Arab Emirates. Additionally, one respondent noted they lived "between Berlin, Damascus, and Beirut."

B. Impact of MEPI

Survey results show that respondents' participation in their MEPI program had a significant impact on their lives. MEPI enabled respondents to grow personally. It also increased respondents' access to education, offered encouragement, as well as helped respondents grow professionally. Additionally, respondents felt that MEPI enhanced their ability to impact their communities positively. Respondents noted that they were able to have a greater impact because MEPI helped them develop new skills, including communication and leadership. MEPI also expanded respondents' network and increased their self-confidence.

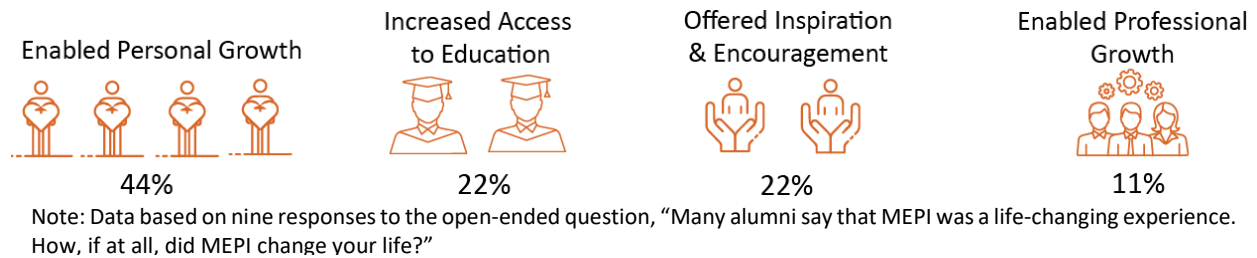
In turn, alumni respondents have had an impact in their careers and entrepreneurial activities, in their communities, and as leaders. Respondents work across a variety of industries and have started businesses and organizations. Additionally, respondents' participation in their MEPI program has helped them develop applicable job skills. In their communities, respondents have been active, conducting projects mainly focused on gender equality and social inclusion and youth engagement. Respondents have also been able to collaborate with other alumni on projects. Moreover, respondents' impact also extends to serving in leadership roles and demonstrating leadership in their communities, despite difficult circumstances.

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. Among ten respondents, one respondent noted that MEPI "did not change my life; the revolution has." However, the remaining nine respondents said MEPI had changed their lives as it helped them grow personally, offered access to quality education, provided inspiration, and advanced professional opportunities.

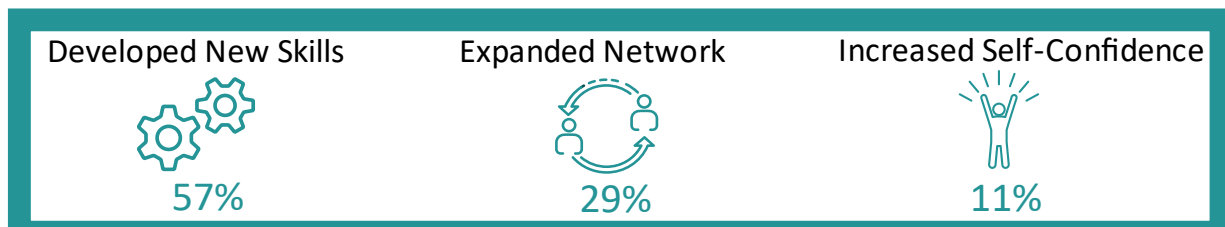
How was MEPI was a life-changing experience?



Among nine respondents who said MEPI was life-changing, 44% (4/9) said they were able to grow personally, including the ability to “see life from different horizons,” “develop knowledge of [themselves],” and it “opened [their] mind to new things.” However, one respondent noted that “the change was only psychological and was not reflected on the ground due to the difficult conditions of the country.” Another 22% (2/9) of respondents said MEPI was life-changing because of the increased access to education. One respondent said the “MEPI [Tomorrow’s Leaders] scholarship offered me the opportunity to continue my education and learn. Without this opportunity, I wouldn’t [have been] able to enroll in another university due to financial reasons.” Another noted that MEPI “gave me the opportunity to gain an excellent education.” An additional 22% (2/9) of respondents said MEPI offered inspiration and encouragement, it “contributed to [their] motivation to lead change” and enabled respondents to “meet many inspiring people who are making positive changes in their countries and societies.” The remaining 11% (1/9) said that MEPI helped them professionally because “it opened [a] lot of academic and professional opportunities.” Moreover, the respondent said they were “selected as a...fellow...with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.”

In addition to being a transformative experience, respondents also stated that MEPI enhanced their ability to impact their communities positively. Respondents noted that MEPI helped them develop new skills, expand their network, and increase their self-confidence. Of 14 respondents, 57% (8/14) said they were able to develop skills in leadership and communication. An additional 29% (4/14) said MEPI expanded their network of professionals and 11% (1/14) said they became more confident. The remaining 3% (1/14) said MEPI was life-changing but did not provide an explanation.

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



Note: Data based on 14 responses to the open-ended question, “How has MEPI helped you develop your ability to make an impact in your community?” Percentages exclude responses that only confirmed the question and did not provide an explanation.



Developed New Skills

“By developing my communication skills, and [being] prepared to deal with different type of negotiation situations, which are...important...to impact our community.”

“The MEPI program boosted my leadership skills and enlarged my goals and I became a pioneer citizen willing to contribute to the development of the region.”

“The overall MEPI Tomorrow's Leaders environment shaped my personality and improved my abilities. Through their support, guidance, civic engagement and internship requirements...I believe that my personality and leadership skills had improved, and I learned a lot.”



Expanded Network

“Through establishing a MENA wide network of influential and inspiring youth, I managed to take this knowledge back with me and utilize it for the good of myself and my community.”

MEPI “contributed to increasing relationships with supporters and colleagues in the same field and [increased] networking.”



Increased Self-Confidence

MEPI helped develop “confidence in the ability to create change.”

Note: Data based on 14 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, 48% (11/23) of respondents said they were currently working with paid employment. Males reported higher employment rates than females, 67% (6/9) compared to 36% (5/14). Additionally, 45% (5/11) of younger respondents said they were working compared to 60% (6/10) of older respondents. Regarding MEPI programs, 80% (4/5) of respondents from the Student Leaders Program and 63% (5/8) of respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship were employed. Among respondents from the

Employment rate of respondents



Note: Data based on 23 respondents to the question, “Are you currently working? (Only select yes if you have paid employment).”

Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship Program, the employment rate was 20% (2/10).

Among the 11 employed respondents, 9% (1/11) held an entry-level position, 55% (6/11) a mid-level position, 27% (3/11) an executive-level position, and 9% (1/11) were self-employed or owned a business. The one respondent who held an entry-level position was male. Among the six respondents who held a mid-level position, four were male and two were female. Additionally, among the three respondents in an executive-level position, one was male and two were female. These results suggest that while females were less likely to be employed, those working may have held higher-level positions compared to males.

Respondents work across a variety of organizations and businesses. Of eight respondents, three reported working for a small business that had up to 50 employees. There was one respondent who worked in each of the following areas: an international organization, a local NGO, the local government, the national government, and a medium-sized business with up to 200 employees. Additionally, the most common industry for respondents was warehousing information, 36% (4/11), including media, telecommunications, data, and IT.



26% 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, 26% (6/23) 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, 33% (2/6) said they had support from a partner they met through their MEPI program or the alumni network.

MEPI has also helped respondents be successful in their careers as they have developed applicable job skills. Respondents noted that MEPI helped them develop skills in leadership, conflict resolution, and decision-making. When asked how they have used what they learned through MEPI in their current position, one respondent said, "by using the approaches and techniques we learned, like negotiation and persuasion skills...these skills helped to build a win-win partnership and...come to an agreement that satisfies everyone in a complex and changing environment." Another respondent mentioned that MEPI and the MEPI alumni network had helped them better engage with others.



"I am responsible for the Middle East engagement...so, my MEPI alumni network is very useful to reach out to MEPI alumni working in civil society in MENA...MEPI trainings and network [are] very useful in my role in Middle East engagement."

Community Projects

Respondents have been active in their communities as 43% (10/23) have conducted at least one community project within the past two years. Females were more likely to have conducted a project than males; 57% (8/14) compared to 22% (2/9). Additionally, 18% (2/11) of younger and 80% (8/10) of older respondents conducted a project.

Among respondents who conducted a community project, eight responded as to the type of project. The most common was focused on gender equality and social inclusion (38%), followed by youth engagement (31%) and professional skills (8%). An additional 8% of respondents conducted projects in education and 8% in civic engagement.¹



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

Among those who conducted at least one community project, five provided an estimate of how many people they believe benefited from their projects. According to responses, more than 4,500 individuals were positively impacted by respondents’ community projects. The number of beneficiaries each respondent reported ranged from 85 – 3000.

The impact of these projects can be further understood through respondents’ accounts of their greatest success or result. For example, one respondent said their most significant success was “raising awareness about [the] LGBT community in the Middle East, and [providing] youths with the correct information that helps them to accept themselves.” Another focused on cultural exchange, noting the “involvement of my students in digital (video) projects about social issues that were shared with U.S. students through virtual exchange.”

However, respondents also noted challenges that have made starting and growing their projects more difficult. For example, one respondent mentioned challenges to promoting LGBT awareness and “the hate speech that all LGBT community is suffering from.” Another respondent noted “financial challenges,” while another said, “the obstacles are physical, and some are administrative.”

Despite these challenges, 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, 44% (4/9) 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.

¹ Percentages are based on eight responses in which multiple options could be selected.

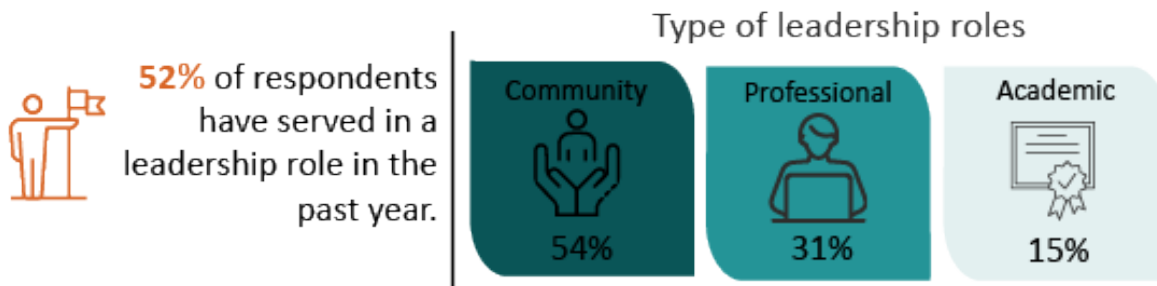


44% of respondents who conducted a community project collaborated with someone they met through the alumni network or their MEPI program.

Leadership

Respondents have also impacted their communities by serving in leadership roles. Of 21 respondents, 52% (11/21) have served in a leadership role within the past year. In addition, those who have served in leadership are more likely to be female. Among females, 58% (7/12) have served in a leadership role compared to 44% (4/9) of males. Among MEPI programs, the rate of serving in a leadership role is highest among respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship, 67% (4/6), followed by those from the Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship Program, 50% (5/10), and those from the Student Leaders Program, 40% (2/5).

Among respondents who served in a leadership role, 54% were in a community setting, 31% in a professional setting, and 15% in an academic setting.² A community setting was the most common leadership role among older respondents (100%), while younger respondents were most likely to have served in either a community (38%) and/or professional setting (38%).³



Note: Percentages for type of leadership roles are based 11 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. One respondent noted that it was “difficult” to apply their skills given they “[were] and are still participating in [the] revolution.” Others stated they were able to use leadership skills through “various volunteering activities,” “by teaching [others] what [they] have learned,” and “through student training.”



MEPI “helped me speak loud [and] without fear because I believe in my cause.”

² Percentages based on 11 respondents who served in a leadership setting and could select multiple options.

³ Percentages based on 6 younger and 4 older respondents 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. Numerous 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, had difficulties in travel, or were recent alumni of the program.

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 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.

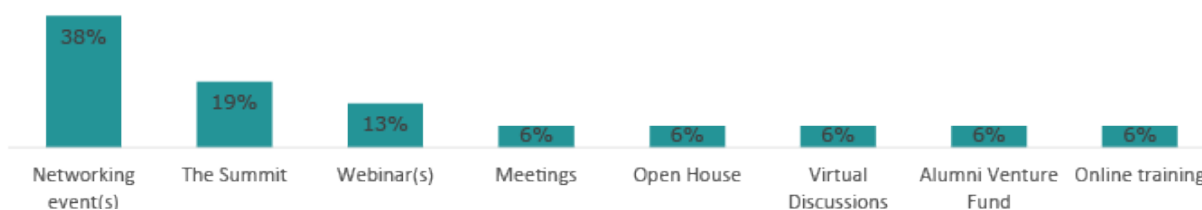
Alumni engagement

Professional Development Activities

Of 21 respondents, 48% (10/21) participated in networking or professional development opportunities through the MEPI Alumni Connection within the past two years. The participation rate is higher among females, 50% (6/12), than males, 44% (4/9). The participation rate is also higher among older respondents, 75% (6/8), than younger respondents, 27% (3/11). Regarding MEPI programs, the participation rate is highest among respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship, 83% (5/6), followed by respondents from the Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship Program, 40% (4/10), and those from the Student Leaders Program, 20% (1/5).

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, webinars, meetings, open houses, virtual discussion, the Alumni Venture Fund, and online training. The activities with the highest participation were networking events (38%), followed by the Summit (19%), and webinars (13%).⁴ Networking events had the highest participation among males, females, younger respondents, and older respondents.

Participation in networking and professional development opportunities



Note: Data based on 10 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.

⁴ Percentages are based on 10 respondents who participated in networking/professional development opportunities, in which multiple options could be selected.

Of the 21 respondents, 52% (11/21) 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 their primary reason for not participating. Just under half, 45% (5/11), of respondents said they were not invited to any MEPI alumni networking events. An additional 18% (2/11) said it was too difficult for them to travel and 9% (1/11) said they were not interested in the topic of any MEPI alumni events. The remaining 27% (3/11) said they had “just graduated” and “became an alumnus only last month so [they] couldn’t access the MEPI alumni activities.” Alumni from Syria do not qualify for many MEPI Alumni Connection activities, such as funding and in-person activities. This current programming is likely the main reason respondents claimed that they were not invited to alumni activities. However, alumni have increasingly had access to virtual events, such as virtual discussions and online networking events.

Do respondents feel secure participating in MEPI Alumni Connection activities?



Note: Data based on 11 respondents who did not participate in any networking or professional development opportunities.

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, 53% (8/15) of respondents built a relationship with at least one new alumnus. Among those who have built relationships, 63% (5/8) have done so with more than five new alumni. This result indicates that alumni activities likely help foster numerous relationships. The MEPI Alumni Connection has also helped enhance collaborations.

Among 19 respondents, 26% (5/19) have collaborated with at least one other alumni from MEPI or the Department of State on a project, initiative, or business idea. Among the five respondents, three were female and two were male. Additionally, respondents have collaborated with civil society organizations to conduct events that promote specific issues and awareness. In the past two years, 50 events and activities were led by 14 respondents. The number of events each respondent reported, ranged from 1 – 8.



50 events and activities were led by **14** respondents.



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 18 respondents, 78% (14/18) said they have shared what they learned through a MEPI alumni activity (event, training, partnership, etc.) with others. In addition, all respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship, 100% (6/6), 75%

(6/8) from the Tomorrow’s Leaders Scholarship, and 50% (2/4) from the Student Leaders Program shared what they learned.

Among respondents who said they had shared what they learned, 27% have done so with colleagues, 24% in-person, 16% with family, 11% online, 8% with other MEPI alumni, 8% on a social media page, and 5% in a publication.⁵ Therefore, MEPI alumni activities likely benefit alumni and their colleagues, friends, and family.

D. MEPI Alumni Interests

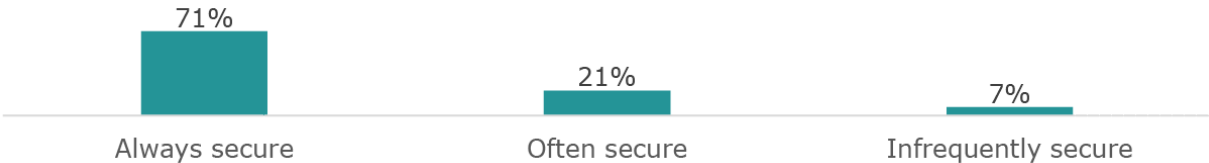
Overall, respondents felt comfortable and secure when participating in MEPI Alumni Connection activities. Additionally, they thought that the resources provided by the MEPI Alumni Connection were appropriate.

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 2-4-day intensive training and online events during weekends. Additionally, respondents noted that they would like to develop skills in NGO management, project management, decision-making, and conflict resolution. In terms of support, respondents indicated that the most helpful form of financial support would be through grants. The most helpful form of non-financial support would be having a professional mentor.

Alumni Needs

The majority of respondents, 60% (9/15), 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 14 respondents, 71% (10/14) reported that they always felt secure and 21% (3/14) often felt secure. However, one respondent (7%) said they infrequently felt secure. This result indicates that, overall, most respondents felt secure and comfortable participating in alumni activities.

Do respondents feel secure participating in MEPI Alumni Connection activities?



Note: Data based on 14 respondents.

Opportunities to Further Strengthen and Grow the MEPI Alumni Connection

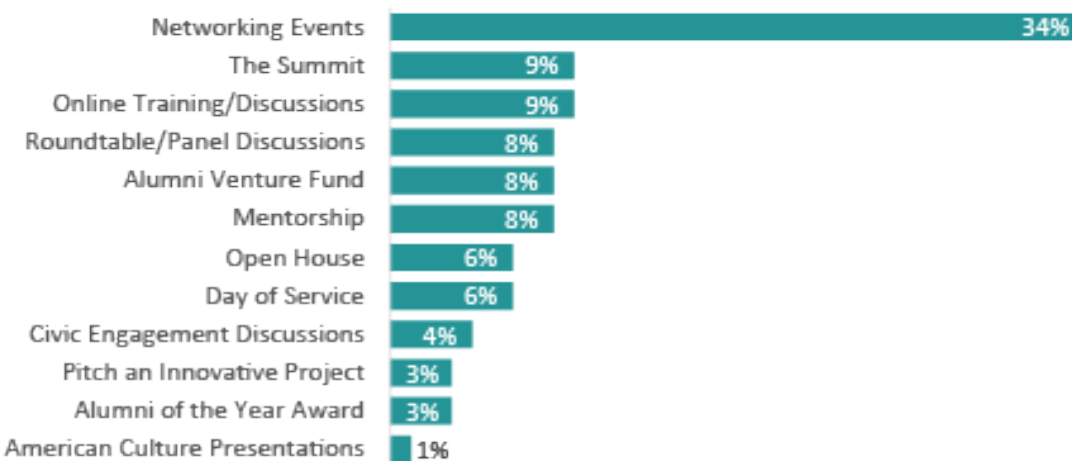
There are several opportunities for the MEPI Alumni Connection to continue and further strengthen its support for alumni. The survey included questions to understand respondents’ interests in activities and opportunities with the MEPI Alumni Connection. Question topics included activities alumni would like to

⁵ Percentages are based on 14 responses in which multiple options could be selected.

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 (34%), such as networking events with diplomats and professionals. The following most desired activities were the Summit (9%) and online events (9%), including online training, webinars, and virtual discussions. Additional activities respondents would like included roundtable and panel discussions (8%), the Alumni Venture Fund (8%), mentorships (8%), open houses (6%), and the MEPI Day of Service (6%).⁶

Respondents' Desired Activities



Note: Data based on 22 responses in which multiple options could be selected.

The most common responses regarding the format of events/training preferred by respondents were 2–4-day intensive training (22%), followed by online events during weekends (20%), and in-person training during weekends (17%). Additional responses included online events during evening hours (12%), in-person events during evening hours (10%), up to one-day training (8%), and in-person events during work hours (7%). The format least desired among respondents was online events during work hours (5%). Male and female respondents and younger and older respondents all indicated the format most preferred was 2–4-day intensive training. However, there were some differences among MEPI programs. Respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship indicated their preferred format was 2-4-day intensive training (27%), while respondents from the Student Leaders Program indicated they would like online events during weekends (33%). Additionally, in-person events during weekends (19%) was the format most preferred among respondents from the Tomorrow’s Leaders Scholarship.⁷

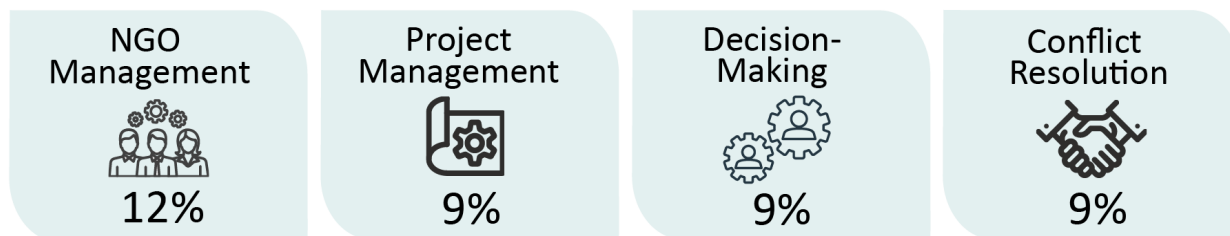
Respondents were also asked to select the skills they would like to develop to advance their community and professional leadership. Among all respondents, the skills most preferred were NGO management (12%), project management (9%), decision-making (9%), and conflict resolution (9%). Males indicated they

⁶ Data based on 22 responses in which multiple options could be selected.

⁷ Data based on 22 responses in which multiple option could be selected. This consisted of 8 respondents from the Leadership Development Fellowship, 5 from the Student Leaders Program, and 10 from the Tomorrow’s Leaders Scholarship Program.

would most like to develop skills in conflict resolution (15%), while females indicated they would like to develop skills in NGO management (17%).⁸

Top skills respondents would like to develop



Note: Data based on 23 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 (45%). An additional 25% of respondents said an investment, and 18% said a donation would help them feel prepared. Instead of choosing a specific resource, 8% of respondents said that all financial resources would be helpful (i.e., grant, investment, donation, and loan) and 5% said a loan. Additionally, there were no respondents who said that no financial resources were needed.

Respondents indicated that the most beneficial non-financial resource would be a professional mentor (34%), followed by access to alumni or professionals with relevant experience (23%), and having a partner or partners (21%). Additional responses for helpful non-financial resources included access to online training (15%) and in-person training (8%).⁹

Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to provide any other suggestions to the MEPI Alumni Connection. Respondents noted that “as Syrians, the situation is a bit complicated” and that “many Syrians are refugees in other countries.” “There [are] no opportunities for those who don’t live in Syria” “but there are a lot of ideas if MEPI opened the way for the resident outside the specific Arab countries to apply for grants offered or opened the way to present ideas.” Additionally, one respondent said they would like “connections to U.S. physicians, medical researchers, [and] medical internship opportunities.”

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

MEPI has significantly impacted respondents’ lives and enhanced their ability to make an impact in their communities. MEPI has transformed respondents’ lives by helping them grow personally, increase their access to education, offer encouragement, and enable them to grow professionally. MEPI has also improved respondents’ ability to impact their communities as it has helped respondents develop new skills, expand their network, and increase their self-confidence.

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. Additionally, the respondent's application of

⁸ Data based on 23 respondents. This consisted of 14 females and 9 males.

⁹ Data for financial and non-financial resources is based on 22 responses.

skills gained from MEPI has enabled them to experience success in their positions. Respondents have also conducted numerous community projects, predominantly in gender equality and social inclusion and youth engagement. Moreover, respondents have impacted their communities by serving in various leadership roles despite difficult situations in the country.

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 to participate in more networking events, the Summit, and online training/discussions. The most preferred format of events and training by respondents was 2-4-day intensive training and online events during weekends. Additionally, respondents would like to develop skills in NGO management, project management, decision-making, and conflict resolution. To further support alumni's ability to improve or launch new projects, respondents said grants would be the most beneficial financial resource. Having a professional mentor would be the most beneficial non-financial resource.

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

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