

WORLD LEARNING

Final Report

Middle East and North Africa
Peace Scholarships Program RAN-I-05-00026-00

Submitted to:

USAID/Office of Middle East Programs

10/29/2010

This final report summarizes the goals, activities and achievements of the MENA Peace Scholarships Program, and provides a list of recommendations, lessons learned and success stories.

I. Introduction

From September 30, 2007 to September 29, 2010, prime contractor World Learning and subcontractor Institute for International Education/Egypt (IIE), in close cooperation with program sponsor USAID/Office of Middle East Programs (OMEPE), implemented the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Peace Scholarships Program. USAID/OMEPE granted World Learning an extension until October 29, 2010 to compile data and to complete the final report.

The program completed all requirements of the contract on time and within budget.

The following pages describe the purpose of the program as stated in USAID's contract; the program's beneficiaries; a summary of the program's activities and overall impact; lessons learned and recommendations; and suggestions for sustainability.

II. The Program

A. Purpose

The purpose of the MENA Peace Scholarships program was to contribute to bridging international understanding and strengthening relationships between MENA countries and the U.S.; fostering skills development for future leaders who have the potential to contribute to their country's and region's socio-economic development; and building regional networks and links between individuals and organizations based in the region and the U.S. An indirect goal of the program aimed to counter destructive and intolerant ideology by promoting greater understanding of the international world.

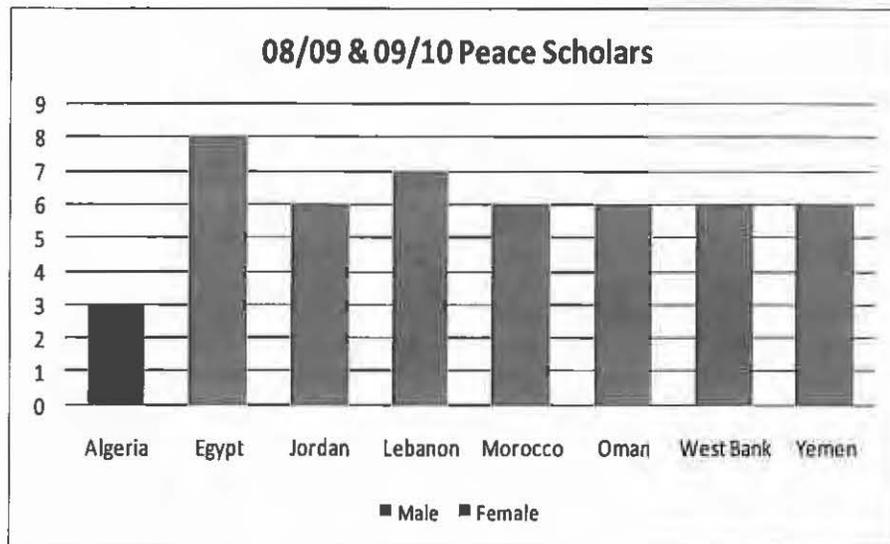
Three intertwined objectives of the program:

1. Development Leadership – to foster future leaders who will be at the forefront of policy and socio-economic development issues in MENA countries;
2. U.S./Regional Linkages – to strengthen participants' ties within their region and the U.S. so they have a greater understanding of U.S. culture, politics, economic structure, diversity and openness to differing viewpoints; and
3. Academic Excellence – to provide potential leaders with academic training and expertise in select sectors and the ability to introduce new ideas and work processes upon their return home.

The program's primary focus was to provide undergraduate study for young leaders across the MENA region with a strong emphasis on complementary program components including: leadership skills building; "Experience America"; regional networking; and initial ideas for "after-care upon participants' return to the home country". Program activities and program objectives were all highly intertwined to meet the goals of the program.

B. Participants and Beneficiaries

The Peace Scholars



The participants were 48 young men and women from MENA countries including Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Yemen, West Bank in Year One with Algeria added in Year Two. The participants were primarily from underserved populations, from urban, semi-rural, to rural areas, exhibited leadership potential, had prior experience in community service, and had completed at least one year of undergraduate study. The program was open to all academic fields of study and the competition was merit-based. Finalists were selected on the basis of academic excellence, leadership potential, knowledge of English, and their preparedness for study in the U.S. Due to the strong emphasis on identifying female participants, 30 of the participants chosen were women and 18 male. Many of the participants had never been out of their countries.

A second group of beneficiaries included the U.S. host institutions and communities where the participants studied and volunteered, U.S. and international students whom the participants befriended, host families with whom participants visited and spent holidays, and U.S. companies and organizations where participants interned.

A third group of beneficiaries included the participants' families and friends, participants' home universities, local communities and community organizations, as well as regional and international organizations and their members.

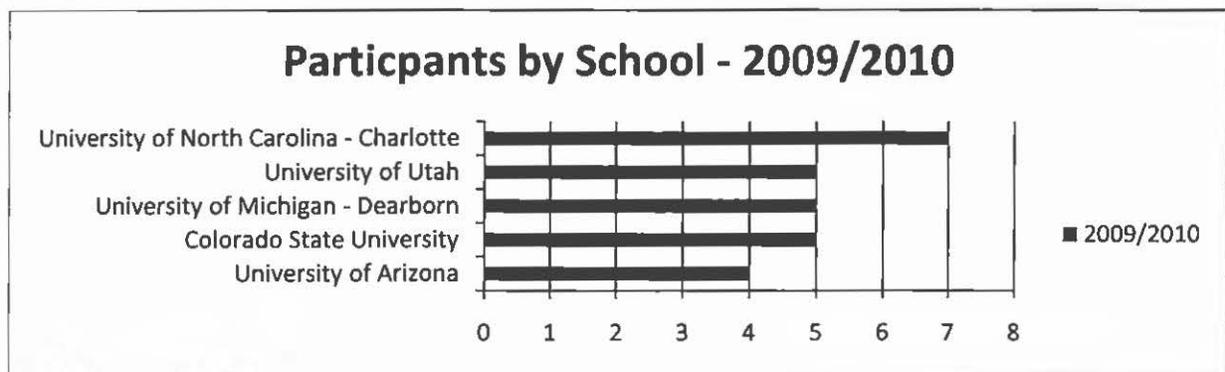
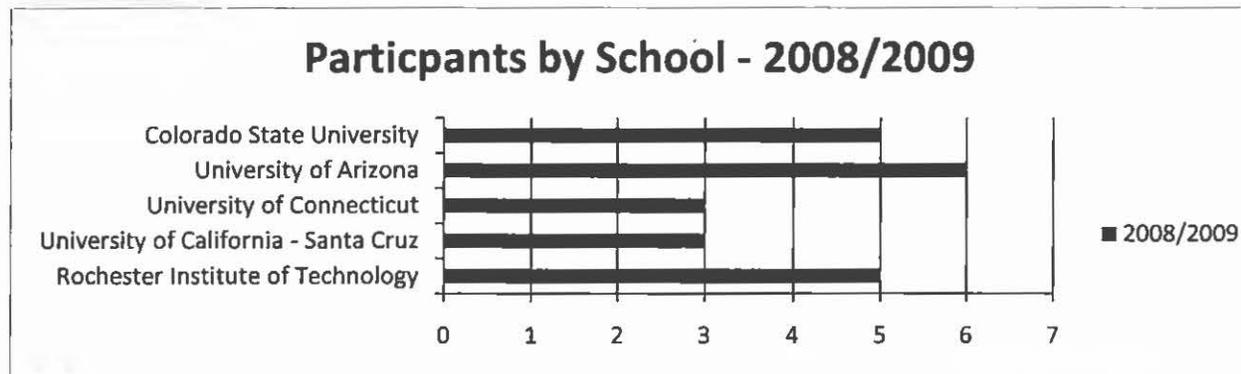
C. Summary of Activities

1. Participant Training Support Activities

Participant training support included outreach; participant recruitment; selection and processing; pre-departure orientation; host institution recruitment; U.S. host institution placement; and U.S. orientation.

World Learning, IIE/Egypt, and USAID staff visited and met with local NGOs and educational institutions across the targeted MENA countries to nominate and support qualified candidates for the program. In years 2008 and 2009, 38 local institutions were contacted and many of them were visited (see *MENA Outreach and Partner Institutions* attached.) Algerian candidates were recruited, interviewed, and selected by the U.S. Embassy in Algeria as USAID does not have a representative office there.

Candidates submitted application forms and were interviewed by screening committee comprised of representatives from USAID, World Learning, IIE/Egypt, and local partner institutions. USAID approved the 48 finalists. Twenty-two participants formed Group I in 2008 and 26 formed Group II in 2009. World Learning gained admission for each participant into at least three universities across the U.S., matching their needs to the greatest extent possible. World Learning then divided the participants into clusters of 3-7 according to country, gender, TOEFL score, G.P.A., and specialization.



World Learning promoted the inclusion of gender awareness modules throughout its training cycle. These were included as a component in the pre-departure and U.S. orientations to sensitize trainees to the role of women in the United States. A discussion of special challenges faced by women returning to a conservative institution after completing U.S.-based training was provided at the end of the program.

Prior to departure for the U.S., each group met in Cairo, Egypt to participate in a month-long Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO). Setting the stage for the year ahead, the PDO prepared them to be independent, to be supportive of one another, and for the challenges they might encounter. During the PDO, the participants received enrichment sessions on leadership fundamentals, organizational and global leadership, team building, presentation skills, communication skills, conflict resolution, creativity, diversity, and project planning. These topics were delivered through an experiential learning process where students learned skills through active and engaging team and individual activities.

The PDO also included a week-long cultural and academic orientation. Visits were made to the Opera House, Al-Sawi Cultural Wheel, Pyramids of Giza and Sphinx, and Alexandria Library. Students participated in field visits to meet young successful social entrepreneurs and business figures and experience leadership in action. The program included lectures from three Ashoka fellows and featured a "Women in Leadership" dinner and panel discussion with four successful Egyptian women professionals and entrepreneurs.

2. U.S. Activities

U.S. activities included orientations: academic training; leadership training; community service and volunteer opportunities; "Experience America" opportunities; and regional networking events. A Ning internet social networking site, specifically designed for the program, enabled participants to network, communicate with program implementers and trainers, and find all documents pertaining to the program.

World Learning and the universities both conducted orientations to discuss and distribute important logistical and local information and inform participants about program rules, regulations and pertinent U.S. laws.

World Learning monitored participants by maintaining regular contact with scheduled phone calls and weekly emails. A checklist was followed to assess the questions to assess participant's emotional and mental states. Additionally, World Learning staff advised participants on: personal and health matters, program requirements (how to submit required academic, community service, Experience America, project planning, and receipt reports,) academics(course selection, how to talk to professors, budget time and money,) adjusting to life in the U.S., ideas for professional society membership, community service, Experience America opportunities, advice on domestic travel plans and logistics, career planning (resume and cover letter writing and career advice.) World Learning approved and monitored each participant's course-load and grades by requiring Academic Enrollment and Term Reports that were completed by participants and their academic advisors (AETRs.)

Community service and volunteering was highly encouraged by the program. Before volunteering, participants submitted to World Learning a community service proposal. After completing at least 20 hours of required service, they submitted a report signed by their supervisors.

A mid-year Leadership Institute held each winter break in Denver provided participants with hands-on leadership development opportunities and allowed them to share one another's experiences, meet state and local government leaders, and develop long and short term projects. Participants visited some of Colorado's landmarks and institutions, including the Colorado State Capitol, the Denver City Council Chambers, University of Denver, and Habitat for Humanity. Participants finalized their project proposals and presented their ideas in small groups to provide each other feedback. A Denver professional hired by IIE with MENA expertise facilitated the session's breakout group work and provided suggestions for their initiatives.

The End of Program Workshops were held for both groups in the spring prior to their return home. These workshops enabled participants to prepare participants for re-entry, compose short-term project plans, become familiar with the U.S. government structure, and showcase participant achievements. Session topics included a program de-briefing, community service activities, short-term project preparation, presentation of program resources, small project presentations, ensuring a successful re-entry, professional development for the future, MENA team-building, preparation for visits to USAID and Congress, visits with Congresswoman Nita Lowey (D, New York) and USAID/EGAT Director of Education David Barth and others, and regional networking. Participants shared their experiences and projects, identified strategies for building linkages across the MENA region between both groups and the U.S., identified how the team could ease its members' re-entry issues, learned what it means to be part of a team and how technology can be utilized, and developed action plans for short-term projects they would implement upon returning home.

Experience America activities were intertwined throughout the program. Participants attended university-sponsored activities and trips to local and distant historical sites and destinations. Participants also organized Experience America trips and activities on their own (with prior approval from World Learning.) American home stays and numerous cultural activities such as a Denver Nuggets game, snowshoeing, bowling, and attending an American classic musical *Singin' in the Rain* at the Boulder Dinner Theater were provided during the Denver Leadership Institute. During the End of Program Workshop, participants toured Washington, DC and the U.S. Capitol, as mentioned above.

To allow participants more time to absorb what they learned during the workshop, the End of Program Workshop for Group II was conducted in March rather than May. This was as a result of lessons learned from Group I. Several sessions were added to the workshop. Leaders from the MENA region were invited to participate in a panel discussion focused on employment, entrepreneurship, communications, and development. Advocacy organizations participated in a panel discussion. World Learning facilitated a discussion on communicating a message to a variety of audiences then engaged the group in an activity which required them to develop and share their message to their peers in a 30-second video-taped speech.

3. Follow-on/After-care program activities

Follow-on/After-care activities included professional society membership support, learning and project grant submission management, a Group I Alumni Reunion, a Final Peace Alumni Event, and ongoing consulting. Resources were developed and presented for Groups I and II to allow them to continue networking virtually, and engage with one another after the program.

Each participant had access to \$235 to join a professional society to continue U.S./MENA linkages. One third of the scholars used the allowance. Sample organizations participants joined included The American Dental Association, The Industrial Designers Society of America, Order of Nurses of Lebanon, Club 24 (cinema organization of the Mohamed V University in Morocco), Better World (youth empowerment), The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, Teach for Lebanon (related to Teach for America), and American Society of Civil Engineers. Participants who did not join a professional society said they did not know of one they wished to join or they were unaware of the allowance (though they were repeatedly informed about it.)

In September 2009, IIE/Egypt organized the Group I Alumni Reunion in Amman, Jordan. Trainers were contracted to conduct sessions in project planning, implementation and management, proposal and grant writing, leadership skills, developing networks, delivering presentations, developing compelling mission/vision statements, consensus-building, and managing project implementation challenges. The primary goal of these sessions was to develop the group's soft and hard skills to better manage community projects.

During the Group I Reunion, participants learned how to access grant funds that were available to them for continued professional development and for the implementation of small projects. This contrasts to Group II, who first learned about the grants during the PDO. Learning grants of up to \$1,000 per participant and small project grants of up to \$5,000 for a limited number of projects were available (in order to encourage more grant proposals, the project grant ceiling was increased from \$2,500 to \$5,000 with the approval of USAID.) Participants received training on how to write grant proposals and received information on how to access the grants. This information also was made available to all participants on the World Learning social networking site.

The Final Peace Alumni Event was held in Alexandria, Egypt in September, 2010. The goal of the event was to enhance regional networking opportunities for the participants of both waves, to advise participants with their professional development, and to create a forum where participants could share their stories with one another. A variety of team-building and networking activities created an atmosphere of unity and mutual support to encourage collaboration between participants. MENA-based trainers supported participants to develop professional resumes and networking skills to prepare them for their country job markets. Participants shared their stories with one another through facilitated story-telling sessions (see *Alumni Event End of Program Report* attached) and videotaped interviews that were later uploaded onto the social networking site. Participants were instructed to identify and use various tools for enhancing their professional and social networks including the newly created MENA Peace Scholarships Buddy Press Blog developed by World Learning (see attached *Blog: MENA Peace Scholarships* attachment.) Thirty five out of the 47 Peace Alumni participated in this event.

The event also featured a session delivered by one of the most active MENA Alum- Kazem Hemeida (Group I- Egypt). Kazem delivered a three-hour session on social entrepreneurship and

the future of the group. The main objectives of the session were to provide a basic understanding of social entrepreneurship as a way of impacting societies, and to build a consensus among Peace Alumni for creating an alumni association and joint activities.

Upon return to their home countries, participants continued to receive professional development and project planning advice by IIE staff and specialists contracted by IIE. IIE contracted a consultant to visit participants in Lebanon to help them develop their project. He also maintained contact by email with others developing their projects.

III. Results Achieved and Evidence of Change Upon Return

Evaluations and impact studies (see *Participant Evaluations and Impact Report Comments* attached) showed that all program activities contributed to the three primary objectives of the program as well as the indirect goal aimed at countering destructive and intolerant ideology by promoting greater understanding of the international world.

A. Development Leadership

World Learning monitored changes in leadership skills over the course of the program and follow-on/after-care period. Specific leadership indicators included higher order critical thinking, openness to new ideas and adaptability, self-advocacy/self-awareness, independent action and initiative, purpose and commitment, communication skills, creativity and innovation, and performance excellence. These aptitudes were the focus of self-awareness training, group and individual presentations, community service and Experience America activities, certain courses they took in school, action planning, project planning exercises, and other activities. All participants increased their leadership skills indicated above to varying degrees and developed a clearer vision for themselves. As a result, they became better poised to be leaders in development activities in their communities in both the short and the long term.

By the end of the Group I Alumni Reunion in Amman, all participants had developed a clear understanding of how they wished to make an impact on their communities, and the procedures to request grants for their projects. In order to access the grant, participants produced a grant application that was to be approved by USAID. Participants improved in their ability to innovate, plan, organize, and grasp grant concepts related to project management and proposal writing as the training progressed. Once participants saw that they were capable of designing a workable project and articulating this in a problem statement, their levels of motivation increased. Several learning grants were submitted soon thereafter.

There were two typed of grants available. One was a learning grant for professional development with a ceiling of \$1,000 and the second was project grant money that had a ceiling of \$5,000. At the end, twenty learning grants were approved and nineteen awarded. Some examples of learning grants that were awarded were based in the following themes included project management, foundations of leadership, startup business management, and computer graphics. Learning grants also provided funds for participation in environmental, diplomatic, children's and economic conferences.

After the Group II End of Program event in March 2010, all scholars were aware of the July 31, 2010 deadline for the project grants and planned to apply for them. Eventually, twelve individual and group projects were submitted (for a full list of project grants submitted, please refer to the

MENA Peace Scholarships Buddy Press Blog at: <http://blogs.worldlearning.org/>) Participants spent a great deal of time preparing their project grant proposals and they were deeply disappointed when they were not provided sufficient time to implement them. Other project proposals were not approved for by USAID for various reasons, mostly to do the undeveloped nature of the proposal measurements for success. Nevertheless, all grant applicants were able to practice and hone important leadership and development skills while preparing their project grant proposals. The project development exercise forced them to think about what their communities at home needed and to form a vision for the future. To allow participants to share their experiences, all submitted projects were downloaded onto the social networking site under Scholar Initiatives (for a partial list, see the *MENA Peace Scholarships Blog* attachment.) Since the site is open to the public, projects may also be found by potential outside funders.

The Final Peace Alumni Event took place on September 25-28, 2010 in Alexandria, Egypt. Thirty Five out of the 47 Peace Alumni participated in this event. Several of the sessions that were provided focused on sustaining the future of the group. For this purpose, Kazem Hemeida facilitated the social networking session which, in addition to providing the participants with a definition of themselves as social entrepreneurs, allowed participants to voice their desires for the future of the group's network. It was decided that the group would remain in contact informally through Skype, Linked In, Facebook, the official Peace Scholarships Buddy Press site, and make themselves available to provide suggestions to USAID for the development of future youth programs and other research agendas.

Since returning home, 85% of participants said their perspective and understanding of leadership changed a great deal as a result of the program. Overall, participants said they were able to use 85% of the skills and knowledge that they gained through the Peace Scholarships Program. Leadership skills gained during program were extremely relevant and had prepared participants for development activities after their return home.

B. Academic Excellence

Academic performance indicators included courses and credit hours taken, and grades attained. World Learning monitored changes in academic excellence over the course of the program by collecting Academic Enrollment and Term Reports (AETRs,) requiring participants to submit weekly emails, and keeping in contact with participants' international and academic advisors and some of their professors. All participants took a variety of courses that developed them academically and professionally, however, some participants put greater emphasis on other components of the program such as community service, campus volunteer activities, and Experience America rather than academics. Some of their U.S. course credits did not transfer back to their home universities, therefore, some scholars were not motivated to excel in that sphere.

Forty-seven participants completed the U.S. program (see *Alumni Contact List* attached.) Most, participants maintained slightly above average grades in their course work. Ninety-eight percent participated in campus or community cultural events and 100% in community service. Reports from university contacts showed that the participants positively enhanced their university surroundings and classes. Twenty-four percent of the participants worked with professors or mentors on research projects.

University programs were as diverse as their geographic locations and resulted in a wide range of achievements amongst the participants. For example, the University of Rochester had a very strong academic program which offered participants a degree upon the completion of their academic year (a one-time occurrence approved by USAID). As a result, participants rated this university highly in academics and excelled in that sphere. The University of Arizona, having a Title 6 Middle East Center, provided participants many community service opportunities in Arabic language and cultural instruction and, as a result, participants rated their community service experience there highly. Unfortunately, their non-degree status did not allow them to attend classes within their major, hence, many of the participants went to the sister community college for their coursework. The University of Utah, located in a beautiful Rocky Mountains and the heart of Mormon territory, provided excellent extra-curricular and cross-cultural opportunities to experience America and received high ratings in that area. The University of Michigan students, living in the heart of the largest Muslim community in the U.S., were the least satisfied with the diversity of their local culture, but had excellent classes and claimed they learned how to be positive and find interesting things to do despite the challenges.

Though the End of Year workshop was condensed into just three days, the participants rated it positively. Compared to their ability to give speeches upon arrival, participants showed a great deal of improvement in speech focus and brevity by their departure. Having begun with virtually no understanding of the U.S. legislative process, most participants understood the balance of power between the different branches of U.S. government and especially the difference between the functions of Congress and USAID. They met with MENA-based organization leaders who are implementing projects in their countries and either gained ideas from them for their own projects or became interested in joining existing developmental efforts.

C. U.S./MENA Linkages

Specific U.S. linkage indicators included: Contacts with U.S. students, families, professors, universities, and organizations; understanding of diversity; contact between participants of the program; and outreach to MENA region communities and organizations. All of these indicators increased to varying degrees. World Learning monitored changes in U.S. linkages over the course of the program and Follow-on/After-Care period by surveying the participants, community service supervisors, and advisors; asking participants to respond to questions on their weekly emails that probed understanding of diversity; and monitoring social networking site activity.

MENA linkages started with the identification and outreach to MENA-based institutions that were identified at the beginning of the program (see *MENA Outreach and Partner Institutions* attached.) Participants claim they still attend or work at some of these institutions and thus continue to be indirectly linked with the U.S. through the participants.

During the PDO, participants learned that there was great diversity amongst MENA countries and even within their own countries. They learned to question their belief system, but not their values, which remained strong throughout the program. During the program, participants learned to accept diversity amongst themselves and in their U.S. and home communities. The American home stays provided participants with the understanding that the “typical” American family is extremely diverse. MENA regional networking and understanding of diversity was further achieved as participants were placed into U.S. university clusters comprised of individuals from various countries. Another way acceptance of diversity was achieved was through the team-building activities provided during

the various activities at the Denver Leadership Institute, the End of Program Workshop, and the in-region Alumni events. Networking between the MENA participants was maintained between participants via social media and Skype. To encourage collaboration, the new MENA Peace Scholarships blog contained relevant information about fellow participant's current work, community service and university activities, as well as their project plans.

An abundance of activities in their host universities, involvement with host communities, friendships made in the U.S., and activities upon returning home allowed participants to see U.S. diversity in reality. Participants rated community service as one of the most desirable components of the program because of its experiential nature in allowing participants to learn about work-life in America and to experience the American spirit of giving. Experience America allowed participants to visit with host families and historical sites as well as get involved with cultural programs that provided them with an understanding of American people. As a group, they volunteered at least 1818 hours at over 50 organizations across the U.S. Two participants also interned with Ford Motor Company in Detroit, Michigan.

Community Service/Volunteer Activities	% Participants
Presentations about home country and culture	65%
Working with professors or mentors on research projects	20%
Participating in campus or community cultural events	98%
Visiting elementary or secondary school classrooms	30%
Joined clubs and groups while on campus	90%

Based on community activities they participated in while in the U.S., participants spearheaded new cross-cultural projects like Model U.N. in Jordan and the East-West Forum (see *Success Stories for Hala Hatamleh, and Tawfiq Jarrar* attached.)

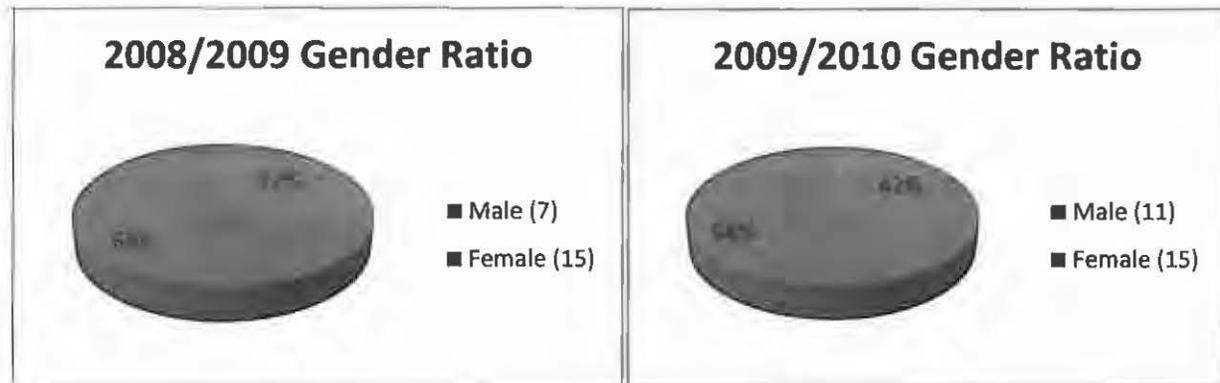
US-MENA regional linkages were achieved through U.S. community service, Experience America activities, and living with American roommates and host families. After returning home participants maintained regular contact with their U.S. friends and professors over social media networks such as Facebook and Linked In. World Learning developed a special social networking site on Ning to help participants to stay in contact with one another, other program participants, trainers, and the wider development community. The new Buddy Press social networking site developed after the program featured program information, participant bios and media, resources, and information on participant initiatives. Useful information for scholars to know about one another on the site included: implemented learning grants, a list of participant's projects, current scholar activities (including employment, volunteer activities, and community service), and relevant news articles.

The Final Alumni Event for Groups I and II in September 2010 was the final formal networking event of the program. Participants gained valuable professional development advice from the consultant contracted by IIE. They had time to bond with their fellow participants and, after

returning home, planned to continue those relationships well as those they made with people in their host communities.

Most importantly, participants obtained a unique and powerful Peace Scholar identity to keep them connected with one another for the rest of their lives.

D. Emphasis on Female Participation



The Middle East and North Africa Peace Scholarships program boasted a high ratio of females to males, 62% female participants, from a region where women traditionally do not have equal access to such programs. To achieve this, World Learning worked with its partners to create an open and transparent recruitment process which highlighted key program goals, such as a 30% or more inclusion rate of women beneficiaries encouraged a larger pool of women applicants.

The MENA Peace Scholarships Program evaluation showed its female participants' attitudes towards community service to be more positive than those of the males. Although, on average, male and female Peace Scholars worked for the same number of volunteer organizations during an academic year, a female scholar volunteered an average of 69 hours versus only 43 hours volunteered by a male during the same year.

IV. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

- **Participants learned the keys to social entrepreneurship and developed the skills necessary to become social entrepreneurs upon returning to their home communities.** It would benefit the participants to have opportunities to access other USAID funded social entrepreneurship programs.
- **Projects were not funded due to program time constraints.** It would be prudent to review project development funding goals and timelines

"Instead of reminiscing about the wonderful learning experience I had at the Rochester Institute of Technology and complaining about my Egyptian public school for being so limited, I decided to start a personal development and career center to motivate and teach students the skills I learned in the U.S.
*Dina Mansour,
Peace Scholar from Egypt,
Rochester Institute of
Technology*

with the sponsor prior to the implementation of this component.

- **All of the participants were extremely positive about the program. They emphasized the program increased their independence, self-confidence and problem solving skills. They also valued the opportunity to meet people from many different countries and backgrounds, which greatly increased their cultural awareness and understanding. The participants thought that their involvement with community service organizations in the U.S. had been very useful, giving them ideas about projects they want to undertake at home. The participants also praised the academic component, which allowed them to take courses in subjects such as communications and public speaking that they would not have been able to take at home. Some of the participants from the first group were able to transfer credit that they earned in the U.S., but it took over six months because of the bureaucracy of their home universities, others were unable to transfer any credits at all. Future programs should keep the same components. Participants need to be told repeatedly and in writing that they may not be able to get courses to transfer.**
- **U.S. cultural norms and male-female relations (and sexual harassment) need to be repeatedly stressed to ensure participant understanding.** World Learning provided additional training during the Group II PDO stressing appropriate behavior, personal responsibility, and understanding of the U.S. legal system for all participants. Separate sessions for male and female participants were added about gender relations. These topics were again covered in depth during the World Learning U.S. phone orientation and university site visits. Utilizing role playing was an effective method to teach such topics.
- **Some participants from Group I left the U.S. with outstanding balances on their student accounts.** To avoid outstanding balances in student accounts after departure from the U.S., World Learning collected a \$150 deposit from Group II participants until the end of the program. Participants signed a document agreeing to be responsible for all charges other than tuition and required fees, books, room, and board.
- **Some participants from Group I performed poorly in their second semester courses.** To avoid such issues with Group II, all participants asserted in writing that they would maintain passing grades throughout the program. World Learning also required the participants to obtain university and World Learning approval of all courses before the drop/add date.
- **Despite World Learning's encouragement for participants to maintain high GPA scores, some Group II participants obtained GPAs below the suggested minimum standard in the first semester.** All participants obtaining a GPA below 3.0 after the fall semester were asked to write a letter to explain the reasons for their inability to meet the standard, what they successfully accomplished during the term, and how they planned to improve their scores for the next term.
- **Social networking was an important component of the program and helped incoming participants equally as much as it did alumni. It allowed for networking between groups at all times.** The development of a site should be required immediately upon program start.
- **End of Program workshop was held in Washington and Group I left immediately afterwards for their homes. As a result, participants felt very stressed having to pack, say goodbye, concentrate on training activities in Washington for three days, and return home immediately.** Re-entry training is more effective if provided 1-3 months prior

to departure from the U.S. as was done for Group II. This allowed time for participants to absorb what they learned about re-entry and not be as stressed before returning home.

- **Some participants indicated that they would have benefited more upon return home if their universities/employers had had more involvement and information on the Peace Scholarships program before they departed for the U.S.** Including the home university or employer into pre-departure action plans might help them to buy into the participants' plans upon return home.
- **Academic programs historically do not have a specific stakeholder in the home country. Participants thus lack support upon their return home.** It would be extremely beneficial to sign up the participants to the State Department alumni site to help participants identify potential collaborators amongst other U.S.-funded initiatives taking place in their home countries and in the region.
- **The MENA Peace Scholarships program was not extended for the third option year.** To continue the program's momentum, World Learning sought complementary initiatives to ensure that the Peace Scholarships Program's achievements were not lost. For instance, USAID's Global Development Alliance undertaking social entrepreneur development programs that support community development in the Middle East would be very helpful in continuing to develop the participants and using their enthusiasm for ongoing U.S. initiatives. The Rotary Foundation is often seeking various initiatives to fund in many nations around the world and cooperates with GDA on some of those projects. Additionally, www.grants.gov offers a variety of youth and civil society building grants that might help the participants in the development and implementation of their projects. The MENA Peace Scholars, well-developed leaders with realistic project ideas and enthusiasm to match, could be the ideal candidates to receive funding through such initiatives.
- **Participants were slow to utilize the Professional Society Membership allowance and the Learning and Project Grants available to them.** Many more scholars requested funds when a special application with instructions was added to the social networking site to allow alumni and current scholars to access the funds.
- **Many of the students stated that they want to continue community service in their home countries but only a few of them know of appropriate NGOs or opportunities.** USAID recommendations for appropriate NGOs would be of great assistance.
- **To introduce the program to their communities and the international development community upon returning home, participants need professional looking materials.** World Learning created a booklet of participant bios.
- **During the Denver Leadership Institute, the University of Michigan participants voiced their concerns that they were not gaining a true American experience in the primarily Muslim community of Dearborn, Michigan.** In response, World Learning required the University to organize additional events for them. Participants were taken to local historical sites, provided internship opportunities, and allowed to participate in the Ann Arbor commencement address given by President Obama.
- **Sacrifices were made because the participants spent one year away from their university and home environment to participate in the program.** One participant, whose graduation will be delayed by one year, said the program was still worth it because she would have never been exposed to the valuable experiences and growth opportunities she got in the U.S. had she remained in school in her home country. Other participants agreed that it was worth any sacrifice they had to make.

V. Suggestions for Sustainability

- Communicate with program participants via the social networking sites
- Ensure participants stay involved in the social networking site developed for them.
- Maintain contact with participants on Facebook and Linked In
- Publish participant project plans on social networking sites
- Connect participants with other networks, peers, and support groups
- Use the participants who have been trained in project design and development, project management, strategic planning, community mobilization, and fundraising for other USAID projects
- Continue to involve participants in other USAID initiatives including development of new programs, ongoing research projects, and activities
- Distribute Scholar Biographies booklet to other USAID MENA region missions and U.S. embassies, informing them about the availability of a cadre of bright, young leaders available to participate in various projects
- Arrange meetings between participants and USAID
- Provide participants with information on other youth programs
- Provide resources for the continuing development of an Alumni Association
- Provide resources for participants to become social entrepreneurs
- Follow-up is needed for both the short and long-term projects. On-going virtual support would be helpful but also chances for the students to meet face-to-face within their own countries is essential
- Engage the following regional partners to ensure sustainability:
 - Siraj Youth Leadership: The Siraj program offers training, resources, and networks to promising young leaders to develop their potential to contribute to their communities. It operates in five countries in the Middle East and North Africa: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen. It would be helpful to link Peace Scholars together with participants of the Siraj program via social networking sites;
 - Middle East Youth Media Initiative;
 - Social Innovators;
 - Mentouri University Partnership;
 - Library of Alexandria – A New Beginning: From Discourse to Action-Moving Forward Together. As the MENA Peace Scholarships Program was incorporated into this project and appeared in its conference website and publications, it would be prudent to continue to encourage participation in future plans to engage with it;
 - Humphrey Fellows;
 - Fulbright Scholars;
 - Ashoka Fellows;
 - USAID GDA CISCO Entrepreneur Institutes

VI. Attachments

Success Stories

Participant Evaluation and Impact Report Comments

Participant Contact List

MENA Peace Scholarships Blog

Alumni Event Report

Learning Grant Reports

Current Scholar Activities

MENA Outreach and Partner Institutions