

SUCCESS STORY

RCI/CEED Trip to Israel and Jordan under the Global Engagement Initiative

Entrepreneurs hit the ground running, not ducking



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Twenty entrepreneur members of the USAID-sponsored CEED program journeyed to Israel, Palestine, and Jordan to immerse themselves in three different entrepreneurial ecosystems.

From 01-07 December 2012, the CEED leadership team from SEAF led a group of 20 entrepreneurs from Albania, Armenia, Bulgaria, Greece, Kosovo, Romania, Slovenia, the United Kingdom, and the United States to Israel, the West Bank, and Jordan to map the landscape and meet visionaries, technologists, financiers, and entrepreneurs in three technology clusters.

With the help of the well-known Israeli investor, Yossi Vardi, and Dr. Glenn Yago, Director the Milken Institute in Jerusalem, CEED was able to introduce members of the group to a *Who's Who* of change makers in Israel. Erel Margalit (Founder of Jerusalem Venture Partners), Bob Rosenschein (founder of Answers.com), and Jonathan Medved (Founder of Our Crowd) were just a few of the marquee names among the 40+ people who met in intimate surroundings with the group to share their stories, compare experiences, and discuss their outlooks for the future. Many sessions included new and experienced entrepreneurs pitching their businesses and meeting with our group to look for synergies and ways to work together.

In Ramallah, the team visited with entrepreneurs, investors, and government officials over a working lunch at the Movenpick Hotel. The meetings opened up the team's eyes to a wealth of talent, especially in ICT, that the West Bank has to offer.

In Jordan, Samer Asfour, the Senior Economic Counselor to His Majesty, King Abdullah II provided us with an excellent overview of the booming tech sector in Amman. Over the next two days, the delegation met with investors, entrepreneurs, and industry facilitators who all made a convincing case to the group that Jordan can be their gateway to the Arabic-speaking, Middle Eastern market.

Participants left with a platinum Rolodex of contacts in all three clusters. They also acquired a perspective on the opportunities and challenges involved in doing business in the Middle East.

"Being exposed to the differing ecosystems in the region was very interesting. Juxtaposing the Israeli model with the Jordanian model created a very tangible and visible difference in their levels of sophistication, government support and general evolution. This was a fantastic event!"—Jon Mooney (United States)