

MEPPA's Progress and Promise, One Year In

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When the Nita M. Lowey Middle East Partnership for Peace Act (“MEPPA”) overwhelming passed a divided Congress just after the 2020 presidential election, the new law made a splash. With wall-to-wall bipartisan support, it would invest \$250 million over at least five years in Israeli-Palestinian relations. But what’s beyond the headlines? Months into implementation, where does MEPPA stand today, and where can it lead? Most importantly, what will it take to truly build a new foundation for lasting peace?

A. The long road to MEPPA... in brief

To understand MEPPA's purpose and full potential, it helps to understand where it came from. MEPPA sprang from an even bigger idea: a global, decade-long campaign to create a \$200 million-per-year International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace. That effort, launched by the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP) in 2009, was inspired by lessons learned over the prior two decades: from the failed Oslo process, from the successful Northern Ireland peace, and from a small but growing field of initiatives building partnership and trust between Israelis and Palestinians.

Lessons from the Oslo Process

The peace process launched by the Oslo Accords was a top-down, elite-driven affair. Diplomats negotiated in secret, and the agreement appeared out of nowhere. Overnight, Israelis and Palestinians were asked to trust each other to make historic compromises. Initially, this exciting breakthrough yielded hope and public support. In 1993 and 1994, at the start of the process, polls showed that 61% of Israelis and 64.9% of Palestinians supported the Oslo Accords aimed at a two-state solution.

But that support was fragile. Fear and doubt came rushing back in when extremists launched a campaign of bombs and bullets. Among these tragic moments, in 1994, Baruch Goldstein killed 29 Palestinians and injured scores more in Hebron. In short order, Palestinian terrorists killed dozens of Israelis on buses, in cafes, and on the streets. A Jewish assassin killed Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

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Support for peace plummeted. By 1995, only 35% of Israelis and 19% of Palestinians supported continued negotiations and diplomacy. Walls, separation, and fear went up. People thought peace was desirable in concept, but without a partner on the other side, they thought it impossible in practice. While experts debate the many reasons each subsequent round of diplomacy ended in failure, this lack of trust – hardening over time, and disincentivizing politicians to take the risks that peace requires – made the work of diplomats impossible.

The trust deficit was no accident. It corresponds to resources. The opponents of compromise have always been well-funded. Moreover, the international investment strategy to reinforce negotiations had a big gap. The world invested tens of billions of dollars in economic development, security, and diplomacy – all of which are critical. But at the same time, we never invested seriously (or created institutions that would invest) in building a resilient, engaged base of public support or trust, including political constituencies in both communities dedicated to peace.

Perhaps it didn't have to be this way, though. Another conflict that seemed equally intractable in the 1980s benefited from a different approach and had a far better outcome.

Lessons from successful conflict resolution in Northern Ireland

In the 1980s, Northern Ireland seemed just too raw, bloody, and politically divisive for attempting end-stage political negotiations. So instead, the world decided to invest in a long-term effort to change the environment for negotiations through a mechanism that the UK's chief negotiator called "the great unsung hero of the peace process": The International Fund for Ireland (IFI).¹

Although the IFI was officially established by the British and Irish governments in 1986,² it was major international funding from other countries that made it a high-impact force for change. Indeed, the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 – a far more interim and modest arrangement than Oslo ever was – broadly encouraged efforts at reconciliation. But it was a bipartisan, diaspora effort in Washington, DC, led by Irish Americans like President Ronald Reagan and Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill, that brought about the resources necessary to launch a multi-generational institution. Then-Senator Joe Biden (D-DE) was an early, long-standing champion. Soon, the IFI became a truly multilateral effort, backed by the US, EU, Ireland, UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.³

With their support, the IFI became a lasting, institutionalized force dedicated to promoting cooperation and reconciliation. It worked *for 12 years before* the diplomatic breakthrough of

¹ Lazarus, Ned. *A future for Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding* (Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre, Jul. 2017), p. 4, available at: <https://www.bicom.org.uk/analysis/future-israeli-palestinian-peacebuilding/> (last accessed Jul. 2022).

² Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Republic of Ireland concerning the International Fund for Ireland (London and Dublin, Sep. 18, 1986), available at: <https://www.internationalfundforireland.com/images/stories/documents/publications/agreement/agreement.pdf> (last accessed Jul. 29, 2022).

³ See generally McCreary, Alf. *A Fund of Goodwill: the Story of the International Fund for Ireland* (Int'l Fund for Ireland, 2008); McCarter, Willie, *Economics of peace making: the case of The International Fund for Ireland* (Asia Europe Journal, April 2008), vol 6(1), pp. 93–99; Johnston, Adrian. *The International Fund for Ireland: A Practical Model for Effective Peace-Building* (Palestine-Israel Journal, 2017), vol. 22, No. 1, available at: <https://pij.org/journal/89> (last accessed Jul. 29, 2022).

the Good Friday Agreement (GFA). It funded a civil society ecosystem at a scale never seen before that produced the core ideas, public support, and foot soldiers needed to both establish and protect the GFA. That ecosystem fought and won the “yes” campaign when the public voted to approve the GFA in 1998. The infrastructure of deeply-rooted cooperation and partnership which the IFI led in building have held the peace for decades despite rejectionists, the turmoil of Brexit, and occasional violence.

What were the keys to the IFI's success? Instead of short-term government programs, it created an independent institution, with the horizon, resources, and staying power to work strategically over the long term. It leveraged and combined the support of many leading allies around the world, pooling not just resources but also credibility. As one British MP explained, “People on all sides trust it. It has no political agenda. Its only agenda is peace and reconciliation.”⁴

As an institution, it became a hub of expertise, helping to develop and shepherd projects and pushing out knowledge to the field. Its centralizing role helped avoid duplicative and disconnected efforts, creating an ever-stronger peacebuilding ecosystem. Importantly, the IFI brought under one roof economic and civil society tracks for improving relations between the two sides. This enabled it to invest in different types of projects as needed, infuse economic projects with conflict transformation, and also support civic initiatives with economic benefits. It often put “first money on the table” that then drew additional private support several times the IFI investment.

In the end, the IFI catalyzed \$2.4 billion (and counting) to create a thriving ecosystem of more than 6,000 high-impact projects that transformed public engagement and support for a shared, peaceful future. Of course, its impact rippled outward, too, as other projects could leverage the people, expertise, and public acceptance generated by IFI investments. These programs became a rite of passage for many young Catholics and Protestants. Some of those beneficiaries and program alumni now form a rising class of politicians who today support both the Good Friday Agreement and a non-sectarian future.

The IFI was critical to creating the environment for reaching and sustaining peace. As former U.S. Consul-General Dean Pittman said, “It's a rare opportunity for a diplomat to have a resource like the IFI . . . with a substantial amount of money to focus on projects and to move the overall agenda towards stability, a shared future, and reaching a political settlement.”⁵

Critically, its approach was to use civic and economic tools, at an unprecedented scale, to *build toward* an elite-level agreement, which, when finally secured, had deep roots, strong constituencies, and robust institutions to buttress it. In Israel-Palestine, we have taken the opposite approach, with such tools being dismissed by some as useful only *after* the elites have reached an agreement. When examining how we've spent three decades and billions of dollars in each context, it is easy, in retrospect, to see which approach provided a return on that investment.

⁴ *Hansard* HC Deb vol 684 debate col 88WH (17 Nov 2020) [Electronic version].

⁵ *McCreary*, p. 171.

Lessons from two decades of innovation in peacebuilding

The idea for a large-scale investment in grassroots peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians also resulted from a strong proof-of-concept on the ground. Over 20-30 years, hundreds of relatively small initiatives sprung up and devised models for creating cooperation, partnerships, and especially trust between tens of thousands of Israelis and Palestinians, both within Israel and across the Green Line. Many involve everyday projects, including bilingual schools, youth sports leagues, environmental initiatives, policy advocacy campaigns, joint business startups, and interfaith groups.

Long-term research shows that most participants gain a new understanding of the other side, see each other as human beings, have more hope that peace is possible, and are willing to act for change.⁶ Over decades, these civil society organizations have innovated, evolved, matured, and sometimes grown even despite violence, fear, anti-normalization campaigns, physical separation, and despair. In many respects, the civil society context in the Israeli-Palestinian case in 2022 is far riper for such an approach than Northern Ireland was in 1986. But what has long been missing was a large-scale, long-term, strategic, coordinated effort to reach *enough* Israelis and Palestinians to move the needle on the conflict.

With these lessons in mind, in 2009 ALLMEP launched its global campaign to create a \$200 million-per-year International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace.⁷ It proposed roughly \$50 million each from the US, EU and G7 nations, Arab world, and private philanthropy. Year after year, volunteer advocates walked the halls of Congress to promote the idea, attracting a growing array of supporters on Capitol Hill and outside interest groups across the political spectrum. Over 11 years, legislation was introduced at least six times. Eventually, House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey (D-NY) joined Republican and Democratic co-sponsors in taking up the cause, and the year 2020 ended with her colleagues honoring her by passing MEPPA overwhelmingly in her name.

B. Introducing MEPPA

True to the original International Fund proposal, MEPPA authorizes a US investment of \$50 million per year over at least five years. At a time when consensus on final status outcomes is slipping, it is a bipartisan law that embraces a two-state solution as an end goal. Like the IFI, it ties together economic and civic partnerships. And perhaps most importantly in the long run, it calls for an even grander, multinational effort.

Until a multilateral initiative is negotiated, however, MEPPA allows funding to flow through two US government agencies. USAID will run the People-to-People Partnership for Peace Fund (PPF) for “projects to help build the foundation for peaceful co-existence between Israelis and Palestinians and for a sustainable two-state solution.” The PPF can support both cross-border efforts (between residents of Israel and those in the West Bank and Gaza), as well as projects within Israel (between Palestinian and Jewish citizens). A PPF Advisory Board appointed by Democratic and Republican leaders in Congress and led by

⁶ Lazarus. *A future for Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding*.

⁷ See generally ALLMEP. *ALLMEP Briefing Note: Lessons from a Conflict Solved* (2021), available at: <https://www.allmep.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ALLMEP-Memo-How-an-International-Fund-Helped-Make-Peace-in-Northern-Ireland-Lessons-from-a-Conflict-Solved.docx.pdf> (last accessed Jul. 29, 2022).

Chairman George Salem, provides high-level advice to USAID (though has no role in selecting particular projects for funding).⁸

The PPF launched last September with an initial call for proposals (called an Annual Program Statement, or APS).⁹ Its target to fund “at least” \$15 million in people-to-people projects is the single largest investment in this work in history. USAID says that it aims to “foster a grassroots effort to affect policy change” while “strengthening engagement between Palestinians and Israelis.” It mentions the importance of peacebuilding, both within and between each society, with a goal of advancing “a just resolution to the conflict.”

To select projects, USAID created a three-step grant process. First, organizations submit a seven-page concept note. USAID accepts these on a rolling basis and reviews concept notes received several times a year. Second, promising concept notes move on to a “co-creation phase,” in which USAID and the organization collaborate on program details. Third, USAID considers a full proposal submitted by the applicant. Decisions are made by a technical review committee of USAID staff.

While USAID handles civil society efforts broadly, MEPPA assigns economic projects chiefly to another agency, the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), through a program called the Joint Investment for Peace Initiative (JIP). JIP focuses on “small and medium-sized enterprises owned by Palestinians,” especially in technology, agriculture, and other industries. Unlike US economic aid focused solely on Palestinians, JIP prioritizes partnerships between Palestinians and Israelis, thus building trust and a vested interest in each other's success.

This DFC program can make loans, grants, and equity investments that both “invest in the development of the Palestinian economy and in joint economic ventures.” In a June 2021 launch announcement, the DFC directed interested parties to explore its general eligibility checklist for funding.¹⁰ DFC says that its loans often range from three to 15 years in amounts of \$1 million to \$1 billion, involve other investors, and must comply with DFC's investment policies.¹¹ Interestingly, the DFC has explained that it can help MEPPA have even wider reach since the agency works in a highly-leveraged manner and can draw upon additional funds for suitable projects.

C. The road so far

USAID first began accepting concept notes in September 2021 for the first twelve months of its PPF program. Although year-end data is not yet available from USAID, conversations with NGOs in the field suggest that as many as 50 to 100 (if not more) proposals may have been submitted to date.

⁸ USAID. *Partnership for Peace Fund (PPF) Advisory Board* (Jun. 21, 2022), available at: <https://www.usaid.gov/west-bank-and-gaza/meppa/advisory-board> (last accessed Jul. 29, 2022).

⁹ Grants.gov. Search results for APS72029421APS00001, available at: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html?keywords=72029421APS00001> (last accessed Jul. 29, 2022).

¹⁰ DFC. *DFC Announces Joint Investment for Peace Initiative to Promote Middle East Peace* (Jun. 28, 2021), available at: <https://www.dfc.gov/media/press-releases/dfc-announces-joint-investment-peace-initiative-promote-middle-east-peace> (last accessed Jul. 29, 2022); DFC. *Eligibility Checklist*, available at: <https://www.dfc.gov/what-we-offer-eligibility/eligibility-checklist> (last accessed Jul. 29, 2022).

¹¹ DFC. *Investment Policies*, available at <https://www.dfc.gov/what-we-offer-eligibility/our-investment-policies> (last accessed Jul. 29, 2022).

So far, USAID has awarded five significant grants.¹² The first, to Tomorrow's Youth Organization, will invest \$3.3 million over four years in the Women Entrepreneurship Development project to promote Palestinian and Israeli female entrepreneurs. Over 200 businesswoman and dozens of small businesses will collaborate on training, seed funding, networking, and mentorship. The second grant, to Mercy Corps, will use \$2.2 million over three years to connect Israeli and Palestinian trade associations, industry working groups, and 600 small and medium businesses to expand partnerships and trade between the West Bank and Israel.

The third grant is for the three-year, \$3.3-million Partnership for Climate Resilience and Water Security managed by EcoPeace. It will combine research by 30 Israeli and Palestinian scientific experts to build a new water cooperation model. It also includes a grassroots effort to develop materials for students, train teachers, and engage 300 young professionals from the two sides in "water diplomacy training" to promote sustainable water use and collaboration.

The White House announced the fourth and fifth grants during President Biden's recent visit to Israel and Palestine. The fourth is a \$2 million project called DevelopMed – Medicine in the Service of Peace, run by the Peres Center. It will create an ongoing consortium for more regular partnership and structure around cross-border medical cooperation, focusing first on in-person training for over 300 Israeli and Palestinian medical professionals. Finally, the fifth project is a large grant of \$5 million to launch TechSeeds for Peace by Appleseeds. This three-year project will work with over 1,000 young Palestinian and Israeli IT professionals from underserved communities to provide them with "full-stack" technology training, general job skills, and conflict mitigation. Already, the direct and ripple effects of these five projects promise to touch thousands of lives.

In addition, USAID is managing another aspect of MEPPA, a major economic program called Building Regional Economic Bridges (BREB).¹³ The program, which a third party (as-yet unnamed) will manage, seeks to "build the foundations of peace through economic linkages," "overcome barriers between Palestinian and Israeli private sector[s]," and support joint research and trust between buyers and sellers.

Although these goals echo the JIP, USAID appears to classify this project as part of the Partnership for Peace Fund. Significantly, the program is expected to have a total five-year budget of \$85-90 million (averaging about \$18 million per year out of the annual \$50 million budget). The program partly aims to create a pipeline to the type of debt and equity support that the DFC's JIP can offer.

For its part, so far, the DFC appears to have allocated about \$2 million to provide additional loan guarantees for Palestinian small and medium enterprises through the Middle East Investment Initiative.¹⁴ Overall, the exact breakdown of the first year's entire \$50 million among these various streams of funding remains to be clarified.

¹² USAID. *Active Programs: People-to-People Partnership for Peace Fund Grants Activity* (Jul. 15, 2022), available at: <https://www.usaid.gov/west-bank-and-gaza/meppa/active-programs> (last accessed Jul. 29, 2022).

¹³ USAID. *Building Regional Economic Bridges (BREB) Activity* (Mar. 28, 2022), available at: <https://sam.gov/opp/58ad704ab2ad43e0b92e236d424c74d0/view> (last accessed Jul. 29, 2022).

¹⁴ DFC. *Information Summary for the Public*, available at: <https://www.dfc.gov/sites/default/files/media/documents/9000115430.pdf> (last accessed Jul. 29, 2022).

D. Future recommendations – building the infrastructure of peace

MEPPA is a marathon, not a sprint. In a multi-year program, just the first few grants have been announced. More should come soon. By Fall, USAID may also issue a new or extended call for proposals for the second year. In parallel, interest continues to grow for an expanded multilateral approach.

This early moment is an ideal time to consider key opportunities for MEPPA's future direction. Ideally, the program will take a holistic, strategic view at strengthening the peacebuilding ecosystem and infrastructure. Here are ten key recommendations to do so:

1. Make room for small and medium grants

MEPPA's first few awards have been relatively large at approximately \$2-5 million each. Yet those amounts are too large for many organizations in the field today. In one survey, 60% had annual budgets under \$500,000 and fewer than five staff members. These small organizations are critical. Many have innovated and refined successful programs despite year-on-year cuts to available funding. The rationale for MEPPA, in large part, was to help them scale.

USAID has worked with such programs before. It managed over 150 grants under the Conflict Management and Mitigation program over 18 years, including a range of micro, small, medium, and large grants to meet each project where it was and help it level up. The average CMM grant in the region was about \$700,000, and the smallest was under \$100,000. With those funds, many programs expanded significantly to new audiences, new locations, and new initiatives.

To maximize its potential, MEPPA should seek a balanced portfolio that reflects both where the field is today and where it can go. If helpful bureaucratically, USAID could consider creating a separate small grants program within MEPPA to meet these needs. Of all the existing initiatives in the field, many could grow strongly with grants in the range of \$300,000 to \$1.5 million. USAID could even do this by working through a trusted and deeply knowledgeable partner like the United States Institute of Peace, a quasi-governmental, expert institution with years of success in managing its own very successful small grants programs.

2. Make capacity building a major goal

One of the greatest opportunities of a longer-term bottom-up peacebuilding effort is the ability to build sustainable infrastructure. Today, peacebuilding engages tens of thousands of people. In a decade or two, it should aim to reach at least two or three million. Getting from here to there requires smart growth. Big money can overwhelm small projects without the right frameworks. As organizations expand programs, they also need internal infrastructure to properly handle program design, evaluation, management, financial oversight, and human resources. As MEPPA injects substantially more funding, it should ensure that this capacity grows in tandem.

One approach could be creating a grants function under MEPPA to support capacity building either separately or as part of programmatic grants. USAID could even offer two-stage grants. The first stage, perhaps over several months, could identify and address capacity needs. Then, if the organization successfully hits certain targets, USAID could exercise an option to fund the full substantive peacebuilding program. In this model, "failure" is still a

success: Even those who don't make it to stage two are stronger than when they started, enabling them to smartly utilize US and other funding in the future.

3. *Revolutionize monitoring and evaluation of program impact*

When your ultimate goal is widespread social change and peace – possibly many years from now – how do you know when you're making progress every day before that big moment? One area of growth in the field over the last two decades was learning how to measure impact. There are now best-in-class practices for both designing programs and monitoring and evaluating results (PM&E). With major funding now entering the space, there is both need and opportunity to consider the next big advance in knowledge and tools, whether it's supported by MEPPA or simply develops in parallel with it.

Standardizing PM&E metrics and practices, and making them more accessible, across the field would help organizations and funders both. This could involve deploying an easy-to-use mobile or web platform to measure and report impact, enabling NGOs and participants to easily collect and report data. Organizations and donors could monitor and benchmark performance. Overlaying GIS data with demographic information could reveal areas of strength and weakness, such as which communities and age groups are being engaged and which are not. Ultimately, a central coordinator like a future International Fund could shape field-wide strategy and investments based on an up-to-date, wide-angle view of activities, impact, and gaps across the landscape.

4. *Invest in program graduates*

What becomes of people after they complete a people-to-people program? After investing so much in individuals by sponsoring these programs, what do we do to support them when they then navigate their home communities? How do we move them toward action and to become engaged constituencies for peace?

ALLMEP's AlumHub initiative has already begun convening NGOs to help them develop and upgrade alumni programs, as well as to connect alumni from a cross-section of projects directly in a growing community of changemakers. MEPPA should also consider these issues. It could fund alumni projects separately or as a final stage of substantive grants. It could also help link projects together in a pipeline so that one program's graduates become another's incoming participants, making peacebuilding a sustained and escalating part of people's lives as they mature.

5. *Balance MEPPA priorities, and always focus on conflict transformation*

The international community spends billions of dollars on strengthening the Palestinian economy and infrastructure. These funds are important tools for saving and improving lives and for conflict *stabilization*. But MEPPA, a small fund by comparison, is about partnerships and conflict *transformation*. MEPPA's PPF expects to support projects that "build cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians" or "further shared community building, peaceful co-existence, dialogue, and reconciliation between Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel." The economic part of MEPPA, the JIP, invests in the development of the Palestinian economy with an explicit priority for projects that "increase economic *cooperation* between Israelis and Palestinians."

In order for MEPPA to achieve its greatest intended impact, program implementers should remember two principles that flow directly from this statutory language. First, both the civil society and economic pieces of MEPPA should focus on partnerships. Uni-national

economic projects generally have other, more substantial funding sources. MEPPA is about the connection points and shared prosperity between communities, which any successful political solution will require. Unless projects include a layer of conflict transformation, they risk addressing symptoms, not root causes, and further embedding the status quo. Worse, they could be accused of looking like the “economic peace” pushed by some who oppose a diplomatic process entirely.

A second guiding principle should be that within MEPPA, economic partnerships are often better funded by JIP funds. When done right, these projects are just as important as other peacebuilding efforts. But they have their own places within and outside MEPPA. It's critical not to crowd out all the *other* kinds of partnerships – such as in education, the environment, youth, sports, interfaith ties, and culture – which have far fewer revenue sources than are available for profit-making initiatives.

6. Encourage systemic change

Some peacebuilding programs have achieved far-reaching impact by leveraging systemic change. They don't just engage audiences directly; they change larger systems that, in turn, impact the masses. For example, some organizations partner with ministries of education, to reach tens of thousands of students by producing curricula, training teachers, or funding bilingual schools. Some bring about policy changes in how police interact with Palestinians, how businesses create inclusive workplaces, and how transportation systems equally serve all communities. Positive changes to such infrastructure affect the public at large. Other projects train community activists to advocate for their neighborhoods or engage elite “opinion shapers” who can use their wide influence to further spread positive messages.

These systemic changes are not only wide-reaching but also deeply-embedded for sustainable impact. Once adopted, they can take on a life of their own. While not suitable for all, many more projects could take advantage of this strategy with MEPPA support. It's something MEPPA can not only encourage but help facilitate, as a project supported by the US government may more easily be able to open doors to key systems and stakeholders.

7. Lean in to religious and non-traditional audiences

A growing cadre of projects engage people who are tougher to convince or historically were overlooked or excluded from conversations about peace and equality. Sometimes NGOs reach these audiences through large systems like schools or municipalities. In many cases, it means working with more religious communities, who were mistakenly neglected in the Oslo period (but who, by contrast, were integral stakeholders in the successful strategy deployed in Northern Ireland).

Reaching to include these voices can be especially challenging and delicate work, but it can have an outsized impact and contribute to acceptance of the work despite anti-normalization campaigns. It not only engages segments of each society who have traditionally been opposed to much of this work – and who often have significant political and cultural power – but it also brings in new ideas and fresh perspectives to the field, making it more representative and legitimate in the process. Though sometimes sensitive and difficult to promote publicly, MEPPA should not shy away from such initiatives.

8. Consider and develop a long-term strategy

One of the strongest features of MEPPA is the ability to focus on a long-term horizon. For too long, peacebuilders and government grant-makers had to operate alone on year-to-year

budget cycles. No single funder had the mandate or resources to think about – much less coordinate – a master strategy to create change over a decade or more. While this begs for creating a central institution like an International Fund, for now, MEPPA itself is big enough and long-term enough to get started. Indeed, its horizon and buzz is leading other governments and private funders around the world to seek coordination and leveraging.

A healthy starting point to creating such a strategy would be considering the theory of change. Through what mechanisms does peacebuilding meaningfully impact the conflict? In order to pull those levers, whom do we need to reach? What types of people must we engage in terms of background, demographics, and their "roles" in society? How many people in these various segments do we need to touch in order to tip the scales in favor of change?

In addition, in building a strategy, what comes first? How do these efforts combine in an ecosystem that can increasingly generate its own momentum to build one step and one year on another? For example, how can we build educational and community centers across the land today that can be physical hubs for all kinds of joint partnerships over the next 20 years? How does a program engaging youth then guide its graduates into conflict resolution and activist efforts once they are adults? How do we build and connect those relationships deliberately?

9. Establish a regional peacebuilding strategy group

These questions are not easy. Creating and running a field-wide strategy requires the input of people with a wide field of view and deep knowledge of Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding and conflict transformation work. While the PPF Advisory Board formed by Congress brings worldly experience and networks, its members are almost entirely Americans from a variety of professional backgrounds.

To complement their insights, a regional peacebuilding strategy group could help. Whether or not formally affiliated with MEPPA, such a technical committee of subject matter experts – heavily rooted in Palestinian and Israeli voices in the region, as well as possibly some veterans of the field in Northern Ireland – could begin work on a long-term vision and strategy. In the near term, such a group could offer its insights and recommendations to USAID and other grant-makers; in the future, it could advise an International Fund.

10. Create an International Fund for conflict-size impact

It is no accident that MEPPA repeatedly aspires to catalyze something even bigger by working with “foreign governments and international organizations to leverage” US resources for even greater impact. As much as MEPPA itself is a major leap forward, \$50 million a year will not be enough to overcome the deeply-seated conflict or the far-better-funded forces propelling it.

Not only can international support multiply US taxpayer funding, but it can also pave the way for a more strategic, coordinated, long-term effort. Some of the long-term, field-wide efforts recommended above will be a challenging fit for any single donor nation. Standing up a dedicated, independent, multilateral institution that becomes a centralized, expert home and hub for Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding is the most impactful way to ensure that someone has funding, mandate, and credibility to do the job.

It could allow pooling not just resources, but also expertise and legitimacy, with donor states each bringing to the table specialty areas of knowledge they have developed and mutually complementary relationships with Palestinians and Israelis for greater trust and engagement. An International Fund even offers a place to link policy and action, connecting bottom-up and top-down tracks, as well as tackling problem-solving on issues like the need for permits, freedom of movement, and shared spaces.

Fortunately, MEPPA's passage has turbocharged the effort to create an International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace. Indeed, in April, the PPF Advisory Board unanimously urged USAID to explore internationalization, and many of the Board members have strong global networks they could tap as ambassadors for the cause.

Moreover, the UK government – and its main opposition parties – have all officially endorsed the International Fund idea. The EU Parliament's delegations to both Israel and the Palestinians have both urged EU participation. Canada, which also supported the IFI, is well-positioned to join after recently committing \$6.5 million to Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding. Other individual European and G7 nations have expressed strong interest; more than 30 governments have been briefed. The Abraham Accords create a natural opportunity, too, providing Arab governments with a way to leverage their new relationships with Israel to address the core Israeli-Palestinian conflict that will remain a source of regional instability until resolved.

Even in the very early days of the global campaign to create an International Fund in 2009, it quickly became clear that the US would have to take the first big step. With MEPPA, it did just that. Yet it's equally clear that this task is bigger than any one country. The moment has come to give one highly-scaled entity the resources and mandate to wake up every day and lead the work of a generation. The time is ripe to fully realize this moment.