



Context

Some of the most promising sectors of the Moroccan economy, and those in which women are numerous, can be found in the northern region, which is also one of the most disadvantaged regions of the country. Inefficient harvesting and production mechanisms, as well as the lack of managerial skills, have led to a loss of productivity and income opportunities for women entrepreneurs. Cultural constraints are an additional obstacle. All of this has an adverse effect, not only on women's income opportunities, but also on the country's economic growth.

Strategy

As a response to this, UNIDO, in collaboration with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), devised an entrepreneurship programme to improve the income opportunities of the rural population whilst enhancing the competitiveness of small-scale olive oil producing, textile and fruits and vegetable drying groups managed by women.

In an initial phase, the project focused on the improvement of the production processes, also through the provision of new equipment to make production faster, better and safer for the women entrepreneurs. UNIDO also trained over 400 women in management, good manufacturing, traceability systems and food safety. All of this ensured that the women entrepreneurs could produce safer and more competitive products, and their businesses comply with stringent market standards and regulations, overcome barriers to trade as well as ensure continuity of exports.

UNIDO also helped the women to reinforce the technical and commercial skills acquired during training, develop further their networks, diversify the production to more value added products, while training them on finances, marketing and promotion. This allowed the women to export part of their production and to sell the other part throughout the country. In addition, a strong network of local support institutions in production technology, business

management and marketing was built. Some businesses run by women took part in trade fairs throughout Europe.

Current results

Over 400 women have been trained in production, management, technological improvements and systems, which in turn led to, on average:

- 50 % increase in earnings
- 40 % increase in productivity
- Improved product quality, organic certifications obtained
- Increase in sales and prices
- Access to export markets

Impact/Outlook

Today, the women that run businesses in the north of the country are better organized, make better use of local raw materials and sell their products locally and internationally. Further, and while respecting cultural values, the project has also helped to economically empower women: they now create wealth and employ others and their standing within their families/communities has improved.

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At a glance

Goal: New income opportunities for women entrepreneurs

MDG: 1. Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger,

3. Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

Thematic area: Poverty Reduction through Productive Activities

Donor: Spanish Agency for International Development

Cooperation (AECID)

Partners: The Ministry of Industry, Commerce and New Technologies of the Kingdom of Morocco

Budget: EUR 2,600,000

Project status: ongoing

Duration: September 2001 – July 2011

