UNIDO support for women and youth job creation in Tunisia

Context
Over the past four decades, Tunisia has achieved significant progress in terms of economic growth and development as well as in population planning. However, and in spite of the ambitious active labour market policy carried out in Tunisia, its unemployment rate has been persistently high, with over 14% in 2008.

Unemployment is significantly higher in the western regions of the country, wherein youth and women have the most difficulty finding jobs. As many as 30% - 35% of these are university graduates. The Jasmin Revolution is a major evidence for significant unemployment trends.

Strategy
Sponsored by the Government of Spain’s Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund, UNIDO, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), initiated a joint programme to support the Government of Tunisia in its efforts to develop and enhance regional capacities in migration-prone areas, through the sustainable creation of decent jobs and the promotion of local competencies in the pilot regions of El-Kef, Gafsa and Tunis.

UNIDO plays a leading role in promoting a sound and sustainable private sector development. In particular, given the limited absorptive capacity of formal labour markets, UNIDO promotes entrepreneurship as a feasible option to create employment (especially youth employment). UNIDO operates at both institutional and enterprise levels, by strengthening the capacity of business, support infrastructure, emphasizing the importance of export and trade promotion, value chains development, and aligning the demand to the offer.

Current Status
- Over 100 entrepreneurs from Tunis, Gafsa, and el Kef received training or coaching for enterprise creation by the UNIDO Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion Programme (EDIP) as well as in information and communication technology (ICT) under the Hewlett Packard learning initiative for entrepreneurs (LIFE) programme.
- About 73 entrepreneurs, 22% of which have started their business (total investment of 1.682 million of USD) creating jobs for some 100 participants under the EDIP Programme.
- 60 Trainers from 3 National Institutions have been trained under the EDIP Programme and 15 trainers under the HP programme in order to improve the quality of services provided to by the Institutions.
- A study presenting areas for high potential for young entrepreneurs and investors in Gafsa and Kef is expected to create an important number of decent jobs in identified areas of IT, agro-industries, renewable energies, tourism, and the automotive industry.
- A thorough analysis of the carpet value chain was conducted in Gafsa identifying ways to add value to the “tapis ras” (woven rugs), commonly woven by women.
Impact / Outlook

As a result of the programme, youth and employment migration policies and programs will be better adapted to fit labour market trends and the specific needs of unemployed university graduates and unemployed low skilled youth in the three target regions. This should result in university graduates having better access to decent job opportunities and engage in fruitful entrepreneurial activities. In parallel, low-skilled young men and women should have better access to employment and migration support services.

At a Glance

OVERALL GOAL: Increase job opportunities for youth in Tunisia
ARAB COUNTRIES: Tunisia
MDGs: Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger
       Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women
THEMATIC AREA: Investment & Technology promotion
DONOR: UNDP-Spain MDG Achievement Fund
PARTNERS: ILO, IOM, UNDP, FAO, UNIDO and several Ministries in Tunisia

In brief

In the framework of the Joint Programme "Engager la jeunesse tunisienne pour atteindre les OMD" funded by the UNDP Spanish MDG Achievement Fund, in the period May 2009 –May 2011 UNIDO has achieved the following results:

- **South-South private sector partnership:** In October 2010 at the National Conference on Entrepreneurship, a delegation of 29 entrepreneurs from Gfasa, Kef and Grand Tunis and 27 entrepreneurs from Bahrain, Lebanon and Iraq was mobilized through the UNIDO EDIP Network. During the event a conference was organized on "Youth entrepreneurship development: Challenges and Good Practices". A training session on UNIDO/HP GET IT module was organized for the Tunisian entrepreneurs.

- **Capacity building for trainings of trainers** using UNIDO EDIP methodology in Kef, Gafsa and Tunis. 61 beneficiaries of these trainings, mainly the representatives of local support institutions.

- **Coaching:** 60 entrepreneurs in 2 regions have benefitted of a Coaching program for youth launched in the regions of Gafsa and Kef on business plan preparation, business facilitation and access to finance. To date, 22% of the projects sponsored by the entrepreneurs coached are operational and 20% are under negotiations.

- **Studies:** A study has been completed, called "identification of business opportunities in Kef and Gfasa regions", and another study is under completion in the carpet sector in Gafsa.

Upgrading Tunisia's industrial sector is in progress:

- To prepare and adapt the industrial enterprises and their environment to the new upgrading and modernisation context, characterized by more competition, the Tunisian Government, in consultation with social partners, designed and implemented a national programme for upgrading the economy, starting by a pilot-upgrading programme with UNIDO’s assistance.

- UNIDO has contributed to the country’s efforts to increase productivity, reduce costs and improve quality in the manufacturing sector, making it more competitive, increasing its share in global markets, boosting exports and creating employment.

- After 11 years of implementation, it can already be argued that the upgrading program has recorded significant results and has been a remarkable success.