



Accelerated Creation of Employment in Medenine

Empowered Youth and Women in Southern Tunisia

Their journey to achieving viable and
sustainable livelihood in Tunisia





Youth unemployment: a major issue in Tunisia

Problem Analysis

Youth and women are among the major actors in the social and economic development of Tunisia. However, the general discourse around them is often characterized by negative connotations such as unemployment, irregular migration, smuggling, radicalization, or disenfranchisement.

Furthermore, migrant flows to and through Tunisia are increasing and show no signs of subsiding, and the government at all levels is struggling to address the needs of this diverse group, especially when it cannot meet the needs of ordinary citizens.

Despite these marginalized groups being the backbone of every community, local social norms and institutional factors prevent them from fully participating in economic, sociocultural, and civic life.

Assessments conducted by DRC between October and December 2021 in Tunis, Sfax, and Medenine, demonstrate that the overarching problem in Tunisia is youth unemployment, especially in terms of regional disparities. It is inextricably tied to the socioeconomic gaps that exist between the interior's lagging regions and the active coastal regions. The interior regions have significant unemployment and poverty rates (both around 30%), as well as inferior living standards and limited access to essential amenities for local populations.

This conclusion was the result of in-depth data gathering and analysis. In fact, a mapping took place first to identify and analyze stakeholders that have a focus on Tunisian and migrant youth programming. Following that, interviews with key informants as well as focus group discussions with youth and migrants were conducted to understand the challenges and needs of both beneficiaries and service providers.



Assessment's findings are also supported by statistics from the National Institute of Statistics that shows that the estimated number of unemployed for the third quarter of 2021 reached 18.4% against 17.9% in the second quarter. Research shows that the Tunisian labour market is characterized by significant skills mismatch, meaning that not only is the unemployment rate high among skilled workers but there is also a deep discrepancy between what students' study in higher education and the competencies required by the labour market. The mismatch is strongly connected to the low demand for skilled labour, the inability of the Tunisian education system to be responsive to employers' needs, and the stigma associated with vocational training and obsolete vocational curricula. This is reflected in statistics shared by the national institute for statistics showing that among the youth with the highest education level, 30.1% are unemployed, including 17.6% for males and 40.7 for females, demonstrating the added challenge for women to find employment after completing education.

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Going into this training, I had the expectation it would be completely theoretical. Not only did it help me conceptualize my dream of starting my own business, it also created an income for my family.

— Karima Ghroul

In Tunisia, youth unemployment is a major issue; young people who are not in education, employment, or training make up a significant share of the potential youth labour force. Tunisia's youth are not only struggling financially, but they are also economically disenfranchised. Many unemployed young women and men believe they will never be able to find jobs and start their careers. Apart from all the other reasons why it is necessary for society to give it the highest priority, youth employment is critical for social and economic stability and prosperity.



A tailored programme for youth empowerment

To address the issue of high youth unemployment rates and economic exclusion, a **three-pronged approach** is needed.

First, by improving cooperation with the private sector to integrate youth into the labour market by reducing the gap between employers' needs and employee capacities - through soft and technical skills training oriented towards the labour market requirements.

Second, by encouraging youth to start their own business by providing them with capacity-building programmes and small grants.

Third, by providing these young entrepreneurs with the right tools to develop their customer base, increase their brand awareness and generate more income.

Soft and Technical Training
Business Grants and Mentorship
Internships and Job Placement

When I first thought of my project, I had little to no faith it could see the light of day. I know the technical details of my work very well, but my knowledge on how to navigate local institutions is limited. — Wissem Karchoud.





ACREM: Empowerment today for a sustainable tomorrow

In November 2021, DRC Tunisia started a 2-month pilot project called "Accelerated Creation of Employment in Medenine" (ACREM). By the end of the year, DRC succeeded in matching 15 female job seekers with several local companies in the Medenine region after providing them with soft skills training as per employer recommendations. Under the same project, 17 new small businesses were created by youth benefiting from the DRC entrepreneurship training along with a small grant.

The beneficiaries' ages ranged from 20 to 35, and 87.5% of the participants were female.

During "ACREM 1", DRC established good relationships with public institutions working on entrepreneurship and employability such as the "Espace Entreprendre" and the "Business Centre" as well as a strong partnership with "Education for Employment" as a major stakeholder focusing on employability in the region.

Building on the results achieved through the first phase, DRC Tunisia has implemented a second phase, "ACREM 2", targeting the young entrepreneurs who started their businesses under phase 1 and were struggling with marketing and client relationships. A post-business creation programme was proposed for the fifteen "ACREM 1" beneficiaries to develop marketing strategies and learn how to make use of digital tools to grow their businesses. The integration of the digital component is not only aligned with the "Go Digital" principle of the DRC 2025 strategy but also primordial to cultivating the use of technology to create and maintain decent livelihoods. Follow-up sessions ensured the implementation of their marketing strategies leading to increased sales and income.

ACREM seeks to provide support for not only job and business creation but also for sustainable career and business growth.



Shifting mindsets

Wissem is some of the fifteen ACREM-made entrepreneurs. Thanks to small grants and entrepreneurship training, she took her life to the next level. While all the young entrepreneurs are still facing numerous challenges, they feel more confident than ever and focus on the bright side of growing their business.



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I feel transformed.

I turned from unemployed to an entrepreneur. Perhaps the main lesson I learned from my journey to becoming an entrepreneur is to not give in to limiting beliefs that women cannot be successful and earn a living, especially in Medenine.

I hope for more programming like ACREM to support like-minded Tunisians who are looking for livelihood opportunities just like I was.

My ambition for the future is to find investors to help me expand my laboratory to establish a national research unit. I also want to expand geographically to other governorates in Tunisia and abroad.

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— Wissem Karchoud, Founder of Anthèse, natural cosmetics business



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Today, I feel empowered and capable of more. Capable of producing more, and expanding my business.

Miss Trendy is known locally and outside of Medenine — and it is fantastic! This summer season was a well-deserved success.

Although my ambition is to expand and conquer the international market, I am facing a lot of challenges such as the lack of financial support and of a reliable workforce in production.

Miss Trendy is gaining more and more brand awareness and engagement from local communities. I have great hopes to maintain it the way it is now, and see it thrive at the level I seek. My business is a passion before being a job. It's a blessing.

”

— Salma Hazel, Founder of Miss Trendy, a sewing and embroidery business





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I am a changed woman.

My ambition for Herbalife is to maintain sustainable activities, diversify my products, develop great partnerships, and increase sales.

DRC provided us with an important set of means of communication and marketing strategies that allowed me to access the local market, and attract more clients.

I encountered some difficulties at the beginning of the project, such as delays in receiving the machines and administrative papers. Despite these challenges, I did not give up.

My biggest challenge was expanding my production, and hence increasing my income, so I can be able to pay my expenses (workers, rent, etc.) and still be able to meet my customers' needs.

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— Kalthoum El Tayeb, Founder of Herbalife, a naturopathy herbs and oils business



ACREM at a Glance

The “Accelerated Creation of Employment in Medenine” programme contributes to solving the issue of high youth unemployment rates and economic exclusion.

DRC will continue to develop an Economic Recovery programme that seeks to provide concrete opportunities for Tunisian youth, particularly women, and thus offer an alternative to migration

To know more, please contact Andrew Merat, Country Director, DRC Tunisia - Algeria at andrew.merat@drc.ngo

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- **Over 100.000 Euros** invested in programme implementation
- **Over 105.000 Dinars** granted to new entrepreneurs to create small businesses
- **Over 150 hours** of trainings and personalized support
- **Over 6 types of trainings** and mentorship: entrepreneurship and business development, market analysis; marketing and communications; customer relations development; to name a few
- **15 female job seekers matched** with several companies in the private sector
- **17 businesses** founded and carried out in Medenine



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Prioritizing youth and self-reliance

DRC in Tunisia

DRC has been working in Tunisia since 2011 as part of a coordinated Libya-Tunisia program responding to regional instability following 2010' revolution. DRC has been one of the main implementing agencies providing services in Shousha refugee camp, as well as to refugees living in urban centers in southern Tunisia. Since 2014, DRC has been implementing a series of armed violence reduction projects aimed at enhancing community security and resilience in key border towns in Tunisia. In 2018, DRC expanded its community safety programming from Ben Guerdane and Dehiba, Tunisia, across the border into the Libyan border cities of Zuwara, Nalut, and Wazin. This ongoing intervention seeks to address border management holistically, investing in analyzing the full system of dynamics that cause tension within and across communities and which fuels insecurity and illicit trade throughout the border region.

DRC Tunisia has been additionally engaged in protection activities benefiting to the migrant population in the south through cash-based interventions and ad hoc assistance actions such as back to school assistance to primary schools in borderland areas hosting refugee children.

As youth and self-reliance constitute two of DRC Tunisia priorities, focused research and surveys have been conducted to identify needs and shape the operation's current and future programming for an optimized service delivery and to implement DRC's vision of enabling displaced populations and local vulnerable communities to have a dignified life.



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