



POST PROJECT EVALUATION
FOR THE
UNITED NATIONS DEMOCRACY FUND

EVALUATION REPORT

UDF-14-606-TUN: Support for Civil Society and Constitutional
Processes in Decentralization and Governance

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluator. They do not represent those of UNDEF or any of the institutions referred to in the report

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I. Overall Assessment

This report is the evaluation of the "Support for Civil Society and Constitutional Processes in Decentralization and Governance (Mab3adhna)" project implemented by Développement Sans Frontières Tunisie – Lab'ESS. The project was initially set to be implemented from 1 August 2016 to 30 July 2018, but a nine-month no-cost extension was granted, and the project effectively ended on 30 April 2019.

Through this project, Lab'ESS sought to strengthen the capacities of local civil society organizations (CSOs) in the regions of Jendouba, Gafsa and Tozeur to better mobilize citizens and facilitate dialogue between civil society and public authorities on local issues. The goal was to establish a culture of citizenship and collaboration between different actors (CSOs and local authorities) in order to solve local issues and jointly put in place development projects.

The project's overall development goal was to "contribute to the democratic transition in Tunisia through the capacity development of civil society and strengthen the sustainability of its interactions with local government." The specific objective was to facilitate dialogue and citizen mobilization between civil society and public authorities in the regions of Jendouba, Gafsa and Tozeur. The project's expected results were to reinforce the capacities of local civil society in order to mobilize citizens in projects addressing local issues of public interest. In addition, the project aimed at strengthening the role of these CSOs in the resolution of local issues as well as setting up local development projects in partnership with local authorities. The project was co-financed by the French Agency for Development (USD 51,000). The UNDEF budget was USD 220,000 (inclusive of the M&E portion retained by UNDEF), and the total project budget was USD 271,000.

The project was partially relevant. The project aimed at addressing relevant needs at the local level but failed to adapt to the changing context in a timely manner. The rhythm of trainings and workshops was inadequate to keep the motivation of all stakeholders and transform the acquired knowledge into practical applications in the project.

In terms of achievements, the project has had mixed results. While most target indicators were met, in terms of numbers of CSOs trained and activities executed, the project's effectiveness was compromised by the organization's internal issues and design of the project. The one-year gap in implementation and the organization's change in strategic direction were the two most challenging aspects that affected the effectiveness of the project. The follow-up in the regions was insufficient to ensure the achievement of the project's objectives.

The effectiveness of other components of the project was positive albeit limited. The local initiatives would have benefited from additional consultations and tweaking to fit the scope of the project and its expected results. Nevertheless, the process seemed to provide a useful introduction to participative democracy to all stakeholders, including newly elected councilpersons. The project helped enhance the capacity of dozens of participants on

participative democracy. It created a platform where local issues were addressed constructively but was unable to reach resolution of any of these issues. Dialogue between citizens and public authorities was facilitated, though sustainability was a challenge. A consulting firm was recruited and was essential to ensure the inclusion of relevant content and information to the activities and to ensure that quality knowledge was transferred to the participants. The outputs produced (the training materials and guides) were useful to some participants beyond the scope of the project. Local initiatives were rolled out at different speeds; while two are still struggling to be implemented, one has received further funding from other donors.

The project was not an efficient use of donor funds. The achieved results fail to satisfyingly justify the total direct project expenses of 166,507 USD. There were missed opportunities in the course of the project to improve the efficiency of the project, especially with a 9-month no-cost extension and an unspent amount of 33,493 USD.

The project had a positive impact on some participants but was unable to generate a catalytic effect. Many representatives of CSOs interviewed mentioned using the skills acquired during the 5-day training to build new projects and request funding from donors. However, the impact was limited to specific beneficiaries and unable to be disseminated to the general public.

The project was partially sustainable. The lack of long-term vision due to the organization's strategy shift was detrimental to the sustainability of the project's activities. However, two of the three local projects seem to still be ongoing, one of which received further funding.

UNDEF's support had added-value to the organization but to a lesser degree to the scope of the project. Tunisia has witnessed an increase in donor interest in local governance before, during and

II. Project Context

Since the peaceful revolution that ended the Ben Ali regime and restored democracy in 2011, Tunisia has had a vibrant growth in its civil society and in reclaiming the public space. The culture of citizenship had been weakened by decades of hyper-centralization and a complete absence of freedom of speech. The central power had limited the access of citizens to information and tools to develop local initiatives. Citizens have long been oppressed and deprived of their participation in decisions as they lack tools to communicate and understand the function of public authorities, as well as tools to participate and to hold their representatives accountable.

With what is considered the most successful experience of change in the region, Tunisian youth are still starting to understand the scope of the opportunities at hand in the public sphere. Youth-led and grassroots initiatives emerged across the country and support from like-minded institutions provided the space for youth to experiment further with their newly-discovered freedoms. Challenges along the way continue to complicate the full transition, such as a difficult economic environment with constant high rates of unemployment and growing inequalities, and a stalling truth and reconciliation process.

As for public participation, the new constitution of 2014 made a commitment to decentralization. As it continued to be fleshed out, with new public policies and legal framework

standards. With new municipalities in place, CSOs are finally able to engage at the local level.

The second component included two additional trainings on advocacy, public administration, and engagement with local government. A workshop in each region aimed to initiate the work with local actors and was followed by two dialogue events per region in order to finalize the selection of the issue to be addressed. Three capitalization seminars and an interregional conference would then follow, in order to highlight the good practices identified so far and to present the results of the dialogue events. Finally, an action would be developed and implemented to address a selected issue in each region with some financial support from the project.

Over the span of two years, the project's planned activities were:

- Launch in each region and selection of 6 NGOs per region to participate in the project

- Internal workshops to design the training modules

- 5-day training on project cycle management in each region

- Community organizing training in each region and production of a guide on "citizen

Five phases were developed in the project strategy as follows:

- 1- Identification and selection of local partners, CSOs and local authorities
- 2- Capacity development: trainings of CSOs and training of trainers on citizen mobilization
- 3- Preparation of dialogue: citizen mobilization by CSOs through the organization of consultation days, training of CSOs on the functioning of local authorities and advocacy workshops with local authorities on the role of CSOs.
- 4- Dialogue and joint work between CSOs, local authorities and citizens
- 5- Project monitoring following the dialogue sessions and capitalization through seminars and an interregional conference.

There was one official partner to the project, the " Twiza" association. However, the partnership fell through as Lab'ESS faced an internal crisis that led to a break in the project's / the g

UNDEF Senior Programme Management Officer mission note; and
Email correspondence between UNDEF Senior Programme Management Officer and the
grantee.

The evaluator and the grantee then proceeded to hold introductory Skype conversations to develop a schedule of interviews that would take place during a field mission to Tunisia from 28 October to 1 November. During the field mission, the evaluator interviewed the grantee's current staff, participants in the project activities, partner organizations, government representatives, and one UNDP representative. The full list of people interviewed is presented in Annex 3.

As mentioned in the launch note, the evaluation adopted a transparent, inclusive, participatory and results-based approach to collect, analyze and report on findings and recommendations. It assessed the rationale and justification for the project as well as the outputs, outcomes and impacts achieved. The evaluator also assessed the sustainability of the intervention including mechanisms and strategies put in place to ensure that the benefits continue beyond the end of the UNDEF grant. The formulation of questions during the interviews and meetings included a gender-mainstreamed approach at all times, both in terms of project participants and topics of focus and outputs.

Given the turn-over of staff and break in project implementation, the new team spent considerable time locating and patching together information related to the project. The new team collected information, scanning all relevant documents and archiving them accurately. This is extremely valuable and indicates commitment to proper organization.

One challenge to the evaluation was that the meetings that were proposed and agreed upon prior to the evaluator's field visit were not actually set up or confirmed by the grantee. Despite this setback, a day visit to the city of Tabarka was organized and yielded relevant conversations with some participants in a large focus group. Although it was interesting to hear their perspectives, the municipal council members who attended the focus group were not from the municipality that was targeted for the regional project, leaving interesting information from the last stages of the project implementation out of the focus group discussion. Other meetings had to take place over the phone or Skype.
p discussion.

the elections to raise awareness on participative democracy and local governance. Despite low turnout, progress toward localizing democratic processes has continued, as citizens start to understand how municipal decisions can influence their lives.

The expertise that was brought in by the consultancy firm was a determining factor in maintaining the relevance of the activities. As Lab'ESS rebranded and changed its strategy, implementing projects from a previous strategy was no easy task. The organization no longer had in-house expertise on democracy -

monitoring and evaluation and gathered 6 CSOs in Tozeur, 11 in Gafsa, and 9 in Jendouba. The project document had planned for additional topics such as a review of NGO governance, NGO law, and advocacy but these were not included in the implementation. It seems that meetings with local authorities took place to introduce the project, but there were no supporting documents to this end.

Instead of following the project's initial plans, an additional three one-day trainings were organized

but documents reviewed indicated low-quality planning and execution. However, surveys

Several project stakeholders, including within the Lab'ESS team, had ideas to improve cost-effectiveness. For example, dialogue spaces were seen as too narrow and could have benefited from additional sessions to consolidate synergies. Training sessions and other meetings could have been more cost-efficient had they taken place within the municipalities, for example, or the public youth centers.

As mentioned earlier, the amount allocated to local CSOs was perceived as low and there were challenges in translating local initiatives into concrete results due to this reason. The revised budget approved in December 2017 further reduced that amount from an initial 1,897 USD to 1,500 USD. The project on water access, for example, required considerable funding, making it unrealistic to expect any efficiency on that level.

Internal monitoring and evaluation were also limited to the oversight of the executive director. The high turnover of staff and lengthy gap in the implementation meant that there were little to no proper transitions. The co-funder of the project, the French Agency for Development (AFD) was not involved in any detailed review of the project, as their funding is mainly to the French NGO and covers multiple countries. There was therefore limited engagement from the AFD over the budget of this project.

The project had positive impact on most project participants and stakeholders. Many representatives of CSOs interviewed mentioned using the skills acquired during the 5-day training to build new projects and request funding from donors. One representative said that he has been using the materials shared by Lab'ESS to train his own staff and volunteers.

The coaching in the development of concept notes and budgets for local projects was most useful. One of the three CSOs that implemented a local initiative was able to receive funding from a large foreign foundation as a direct result of that support.

However, the challenges that the project faced hindered the chances for higher impact. As the gap in implementation was lengthy, the beneficiaries changed during the course of the project. While the target was the same 6 CSOs from each region, only 3 CSOs from each region participated in all the projects' activities. Trainings were seen as too far apart from each other.

The consultation days did not have the expected impact as they took place between January and February 2017 and as they were not followed-up on thereafter due to the resignation of the previous Lab'ESS team. It would have been judicious to consider repeating this activity as the project resumed, especially to rebuild trust between citizens, CSOs, and Lab'ESS.

Fatma Touzri, the regional director of the Ibn Khaldoun association in the North West of Tunisia was one of the most active actors in the project. Together with Sabrine Nayet Al Imam a local activist, she participated in most of the project's activities, was a resource person for the region, and led the local initiative on water access.

In an in-person focus group, Fatma affirmed that the impact of the local initiative was beyond the specific theme that was chosen. In fact, she highlighted the positive impact of the process itself on the new municipality and all stakeholders involved in the project. According to her, this was the first experiences in wh

The sustainability of this project is directly linked to the commitment of the participants to continue applying the principles of democratic development. In itself, it is unlikely that the project created an impetus towards democratic processes.

Despite the positive reviews of the activities themselves, implementation of the project was focused on reaching the targets set out initially, with little regard to a "bigger picture". As such,

other donors linked to foreign governments who may be perceived as instruments of foreign policy agendas.

The UNDP staff member highlighted the need to have

VI. Lessons Learned

VII. Annexes

Annex 1: Evaluation Questions



Impact

To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?

To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address?
Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative?
To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization?
Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why?

Annex 2: Documents Reviewed

Background documents

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Tunisia's municipal elections*:
<https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/76299>

International Foundation for Electoral Systems, *Elections in Tunisia, 2018 Municipal Elections: Frequently Asked Questions*:

https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2018_ifes_tunisia_municipal_elections_faqs_english_final.pdf

Project documentation - UDF-14-TUN-606

Project document

Reports: mid-term progress report, final narrative and financial reports

Milestone verification narrative and financial reports

Supporting documents from the grantee: participants' registration forms, internal summaries, photos, consultancy reports, social media posts.

Project outputs

PowerPoint Presentations for trainings (that were disseminated as guides)

Contracts with the three local partners

Capitalization guide

Annex 3: Persons Interviewed

Lab'ESS staff	
Rachid Labidi	Executive Director
Yousri Helal	Operations Manager
Ramzi Ben Farhar	Finance Manager
Main project partners	
Med Khales Soltane	President of the Association Mostakbelna, Tozeur
Jamel Fattah	Program Coordinator at Association Irada, Gafsa
Ali Dellaad	Vice-President of Ibn Khaldoun Association, Jendouba
Fatma Touzri	Regional Director of Ibn Khaldoun Association, Jendouba
Participants	
Daou Ben Salah	President of the League Ennafir for Development, Gafsa
Khawla Tej	Program Coordinator at Impact Foundation, Gafsa
Wided Saidy	President of the Association to Protect the Medina of Tozeur, Tozeur
Abla Baccouni	Tunisian Association for Youth and the Future, Gafsa
Awatef Dhiri	Municipal Council Member of Gafsa
Nafissa Besghaier	Municipal Council Member of Nafta, Gafsa
Sabrine Nayet Al Imam	Civil Society Activist and project resource person, Jendouba
Sayda Rizaki	Municipal Council Member of Ain Sobh Nadhour, Jendouba
Sanaa Jemai	Municipal Council Member of Tabarka and Member of the Women's Association in Tabarka, Jendouba
Salma Dhouafi	Agricultural specialist and advisor at the Ministry of Agriculture in Tabarka, Jendouba
Najwa Askari	Municipal Council Member of Aib Sobh Nadhour, Jendouba
Other stakeholders	
Zied Boussem	Pandora Consulting
Helene Willart	French Agency for Development
Wafa Madder	UNDP
Med Hedi Ben Ali	UNDP

