



Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises (SCORE) Programme Phase IV; and Support for Crisis Management for 100 SMEs in Tunisia (AGC Project)

ILO DC/SYMBOL: GLO/21/60/MUL, TUN/21/50/MUL, TUN/22/02/DEU

Type of Evaluation: Project

Evaluation timing: Final

Evaluation nature: Independent

Project countries: Tunisia, Bolivia, Myanmar and Ethiopia

P&B Outcome(s): Outcome 4

SDG(s): SDG 5, 7, 8, 9 and 12

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LO Administrative Office: Department of Enterprises / SME Unit

ILO Technical Office(s): Enterprises / SME Unit

Joint evaluation agencies:

Project duration: 1 January 2022 to June 2025

Donor and budget: Multi donor Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) & Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). Budget: USD 6,939,682 for Global SCORE Phase IV; Tunisia AGC – Delivering SCORE Training to 100 SMEs – 2022 Donor, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of Germany provided USD 532,000 through Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

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Key Words: enhance productivity, improve working conditions, competitive, responsible enterprise, SME, trainer, module, support, crisis management, supply chain



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

This report presents the findings of the final independent evaluation of the projects: “Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises (SCORE) Programme Phase IV” and “Support for Crisis Management for 100 SMEs in Tunisia (AGC Project).”, implemented by International Labour Organization (ILO) Enterprises / Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Unit. The SCORE project was funded by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation through a grant amounting to USD 6,939,682, whereas the AGC project was funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of Germany through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) with USD 532,000. The anticipated impact of the global SCORE Programme Phase IV is to contribute to improved productivity and working conditions in SMEs in national and global supply chains in the four target countries. The strategy and interventions are expected to improve SMEs’ internal management practices, leading to higher productivity and improved working conditions. The overall objective of the Support for Crisis Management for SMEs (AGC) project in Tunisia is to enhance productivity and working conditions in 100 Tunisian SMEs. The project aimed to provide training and technical assistance to these SMEs through three SCORE modules: M1: Workplace Cooperation, M2: Business Continuity Planning, and M3: Gender Equality.

Present situation of the project

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has started the implementation of the SCORE project on 1 January 2022. At the time of the final evaluation, the project finished implementation on 31 December 2024 in three countries: Ethiopia, Bolivia, and Myanmar, and is still ongoing until June 2025 in Tunisia. The AGC project in Tunisia was implemented from December 2022 to November 2024. The results of the final evaluation of the projects will be used for measuring its impact to date and the level of achievement of the established projects’ objectives. For the SCORE project, this final evaluation has covered the project implementation period from January 2022 to 31 December 2024 for the SCORE Phase IV project. The final evaluation covered the entire duration of the AGC project in Tunisia.



Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The final independent evaluation has mostly focused on accountability, problem solving and learning. Among other points, this final evaluation (FE) has identified what worked, what did not work at output, outcome and impact levels, what is sustainable, what is the legacy of the project and what are the recommendations for the future. The evaluation criteria were analyzed at the design stages, together with any mitigation measures that eventually were taken.

The key tasks of the final evaluation were to: 1. Assess the SCORE and the AGC intervention in Tunisia, focusing on what has worked, what has not worked, and why this was the case; 2. Examine whether the best approach was taken and executed optimally; and 3. Provide a clear articulation of the 'lessons learned' and identify good practices to inform future project development and contribute to the knowledge development of the ILO and project stakeholders. The evaluation has covered the period from January 2022 to December 2024 to create an accurate and comprehensive picture of the global project's context and development. It has assessed the progress of the SCORE Programme Phase IV in Tunisia and the global components, as well as the AGC project in Tunisia. The evaluation has examined the linkages between the various country projects and generated findings on the six evaluation criteria, along with lessons learned that can be applied to current project countries and other initiatives that may wish to adopt a similar approach. The gender mainstreaming, non-discrimination, disability, environmental sustainability, social dialogue and International Labour Standards dimensions were considered a cross-cutting concern throughout the methodology, deliverables, and final report of the evaluation. The primary end users of the evaluation findings are donors SECO, NORAD and BMZ through GIZ; the SCORE project staff, ILO Country Offices, ILO's management (the project team, ENTERPRISES, MSME Unit and the Regional Offices for Africa, Asia and Latin America overseeing the implementation of the project and other field and headquarters staff; and Tripartite national advisory committees and partner organizations in the evaluated countries.

Methodology of evaluation

Different evaluation tools were combined to ensure an evidence-based qualitative and quantitative assessment. The evaluator emphasized the cross-validation of data through triangulation and an assessment of the plausibility of the results obtained.



The methodological approach included a desk review and semi-structured individual interviews and focus-group discussions. A field evaluation mission to Tunisia was conducted by the evaluators from 1 to 6 December 2024. Data was gathered from different sources, by different methods for each of the evaluation questions, and findings were triangulated to draw valid and reliable conclusions. Data was disaggregated, at a minimum, by sex and by other dimensions where available. Conclusions and recommendations were based on evaluation findings (deductive reasoning). The evaluation was conducted as an independent exercise from October 2024 to January 2025 in close coordination with ILO's Evaluation Office and the ILO's MSME Unit SCORE Project teams at HQs and Tunisia, donors, public and private project implementation partners, trainers and SMEs, and resulted in the following findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

The key findings of this final evaluation are:

1. Relevance and strategic fit of the intervention: Both SCORE IV programme and the AGC project significantly contribute to national development by improving productivity and working conditions in SMEs. They align with global sustainable development agendas, as well as with national priorities outlined in 1) the SDGs, 2) local and national development policies in Tunisia, 3) donor priorities from SECO, NORAD, and BMZ/GIZ, and 4) the ILO's mandate and strategic objectives.

2. Validity of intervention design: The project's design was valid during the design phase, showing consistency between outputs and outcomes in the LogFrame, supported by a thorough baseline assessment, root causes, and barriers. Gender equality, labor standards, and social dialogue relevant to the context were fully integrated into the design.

3. Project coherence: The project coherence is satisfactory, as SCORE programmes have operated in fourteen plus an additional seventeen countries for fifteen years. They have fostered collaboration with similar initiatives to enhance productivity and improve SME working conditions at national, regional, and global levels. Additionally, the complementarity with other interventions and internal coherence among donors, implementing agencies, and countries is also satisfactory.



4: Intervention progress and effectiveness: The project outputs and direct outcomes evaluation across four countries met expectations. The six outputs from the two project outcomes were achieved satisfactorily in the SCORE Phase IV Programme. The AGC project reached its objectives and three outcomes by training 101 SMEs in three SCORE modules: Workplace Cooperation, Business Continuity Planning, and Gender Equality. The projects delivered high-quality outputs, demonstrating strong progress and effectiveness. They promoted collaboration among government agencies, industry associations, employers, workers, and key stakeholders to support SME development and improve working conditions. In Tunisia, diverse SCORE partners included two health inspection services, nine technical support centers, one SME financing bank, and many private sector trainers. A total of 57 trainers were trained in the SCORE methodology, with 22 (39%) being female. Foundations were established for SCORE to achieve sustainability on a national level, meeting local SMEs' needs and integrating into the national economic framework with both public and private partners. Many SMEs enhanced their capacity to connect with supply chains through improved productivity and access to leading buyers. The SCORE methodology can be replicated in countries without effective programs to sustain competitive and responsible enterprises, boosting productivity and improving working conditions in SMEs worldwide.

5. Efficiency of resource usage: The SCORE Phase IV programme and AGC project in Tunisia aimed for cost-effectiveness during implementation. Partners, trainers, and SMEs exceeded the expected output described in their ToRs. Project and financial management were generally efficient. The SCORE Phase IV programme was extended until June 30, 2025, to complete its activities, while the AGC project ended on November 30, 2024. According to the December 31, 2023, financial statement, of the total budget of USD 6,372,291, 67.8% (USD 4,317,838) was spent, leaving USD 2,054,453 remaining.

6. Effectiveness of management arrangements: ILO effectively supervises and manages projects. The M&E strategy for SCORE Phase IV and the AGC project in Tunisia was well-developed. Project and financial reports for all donors were satisfactory.



7. Impact orientation and sustainability of the intervention: ILO's expected long-term outcomes and contributions to the priorities of funding partners SECO, NORAD, and BMZ/GIZ are likely. Policymakers and stakeholders engaged in capacity-building to enhance SME productivity and improve working conditions in SCORE phase IV countries. In Tunisia, national ownership and institutional capacity have been strengthened to ensure ongoing SCORE service delivery, with partners committed to providing these services. The employers' organization, UTICA, maintains a cooperative relationship with the ILO. The SCORE programme in Tunisia has formed twelve partnerships with technical support centres and Occupational Safety & Health (OSH) inspection centres under the Ministry of Industry, housing SCORE trainers and delivering services to SMEs, along with self-employed trainers providing SCORE training. The AGC project, training 100 SMEs and funded by BMZ/GIZ, demonstrated the sustainability of SCORE service delivery, utilizing diverse social media for promotion and beneficiary identification. The SCORE Phase IV programme enhanced productivity and working conditions in SMEs, integrating them into supply chains by improving productivity, working conditions, and access to lead buyers. Trainers and SMEs report significant, lasting effects from SCORE training combined with technical assistance. Most notably, the establishment of Enterprise Improvement Teams (EITs), developing concrete improvement plans, has been crucial to the SCORE approach. EITs foster ownership among SMEs by involving workers, positively influencing dialogue and cooperation on the shop floor. These teams manage various performance improvement processes, empowering SMEs to resolve issues independently and effectively manage certification processes like ISO and HACCP. SCORE's effects are more pronounced in larger, structured enterprises integrated into supply chains.

8. Gender Mainstreaming, non-discrimination, disability, environmental sustainability, International Labour Standards, and social dialogue: were integrated throughout the project for all four countries, from design to implementation, and included in M&E systems and reporting. Gender-disaggregated data was consistently reported in the indicators. Environmental sustainability was promoted through the ILO SCORE4Climate training module, and projects emphasized international labour standards and social dialogue. In Tunisia's AGC project, the SCORE Module on Gender



Equality (MIG) was applied to 101 SMEs, where women held roles in improvement teams and senior management. By 2024, female trainers in Tunisia reached 39%. Over six years, female permanent employees grew by 12% and temporary/contract workers by 19%, highlighting the potential of the female workforce in Tunisia and globally. The project also addressed the needs of women, men, and vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities.

The **key conclusions** of this final evaluation are:

1. The SCORE programme in Tunisia achieved notable success, especially in educating government officials and ensuring a consistent supply of certified trainers. Nevertheless, challenges arise from a shortage of expert trainers and the insufficient representation of women in essential stakeholder groups. A project extension should aim to bridge these gaps, placing a strong emphasis on gender inclusivity, capacity development, and stakeholder engagement to guarantee the program's sustainability and its alignment with global standards.
2. The enterprise training initiatives in Tunisia, specifically those under the SCORE and the AGC projects, have exhibited notable success, particularly concerning gender inclusion, enterprise engagement, and financial sustainability. The lack of dropout rates and the elevated levels of satisfaction amongst participants further underscore the program's significance. Looking ahead, it is imperative to prioritize the expansion of outreach to smaller enterprises, enhance engagement with specialized training programs such as SCORE4Climate, implement digitalization modules, and promote eco-tourism. Additionally, reinforcing gender-focused initiatives should be regarded as a critical objective in any prospective project extension.
3. Tunisia's implementation of SCORE modules from 2019 to 2024 demonstrates a targeted strategy toward foundational workplace practices, especially via the Workplace Cooperation module. Although this has produced significant successes, particularly in its relevance to SMEs, the narrow variety of modules delivered indicates potential areas for growth and improvement in meeting broader enterprise requirements. A subsequent project should concentrate on the overall productivity ecosystem for decent work, which aligns with ILO's mandate. It's essential to diversify SCORE training content,

enhance regional collaboration, and strengthen monitoring systems to achieve a more extensive and sustainable impact.

4. The SCORE programme and the AGC project have notably enhanced productivity, cost savings, and employee engagement. The modest advancements in energy efficiency and waste reduction reveal new opportunities for future interventions. Implementing a customized strategy to tackle these areas could further boost the program's effectiveness, leading to sustainable results for SMEs.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main recommendations

1. Enhance Gender Representation and Build on Gender Inclusivity by strengthening outreach and recruitment efforts to increase female participation across all categories, particularly among employer representatives, union representatives, and trainers. Gender-sensitive policies and incentives should be introduced to encourage more women to participate in the programme. Tunisia's success in training a high percentage of female staff provides a strong foundation for further gender-sensitive initiatives. Expanding opportunities for women in leadership and technical roles within enterprises could be a key focus for future programming.
2. Strengthen the Monitoring and Sustainability system and Strengthen Data Systems by developing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track the progress of trainers and stakeholders beyond the project timeline. This will ensure that the project's impact is sustained and scalable. Ensure consistent and comprehensive data collection on training outcomes, including qualitative metrics (e.g., enterprise feedback on specific modules) and long-term impacts on productivity or workplace improvements. Provide additional training to trainers and partners on data collection and monitoring to improve the reliability and consistency of data.
3. Enhance Training Depth and Expand Module Diversity by introducing and adapting additional SCORE modules such as SCORE4Climate, Workforce Management, and Hospitality Coaching to address emerging needs in key sectors, particularly

in the tourism and manufacturing industries. Diversifying module delivery could enhance the program's relevance and attract more enterprises. Additionally, deliver targeted modules that address sector-specific needs, such as Food Safety for the agribusiness sector or SCORE4Climate for industries focusing on sustainability. Encourage enterprises to participate in additional training modules, particularly specialized courses, to deepen their capacity-building and foster long-term organizational improvements.

4. Strengthen Regional Integration by exploring opportunities to expand SCORE coverage in West and French-speaking Africa, fostering regional exchanges and partnerships. This would enable Tunisia to benefit from shared experiences and best practices while contributing to the programme's growth in the region.
5. Leverage High Engagement with the Workplace Cooperation module by integrating complementary elements from other modules (e.g., Safety & Health or Workforce Management) to provide a more holistic training experience for enterprises.
6. Initiate another Phase of the AGC project in 2025 in Tunisia with new funding. As the SCORE project has ended globally, initiate another phase of the AGC project in Tunisia with a focus on Gender component, by sourcing for new funding. Introduce and adapt additional SCORE modules to existing and additional SMEs, such as SCORE4Climate, Workforce Management, and Hospitality Coaching to address emerging needs in key sectors, particularly in the tourism and manufacturing industries in Tunisia.

Main lessons learned and good practices

The following lessons were learned from the implementation of the project:

1. ILO's marketing and communication efforts in the frames of the SCORE project's phase IV have been weak and limited primarily to its networks. As the ILO is neither an SME development nor a business development services provider, it lacks recognition within SME communities. To ensure that the SCORE service reaches the market, it is essential to enhance and proactively engage in communication and marketing of SCORE training within these sectors.

2. Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) that understand the importance and recognize the value of Business Development Services (BDS) are more inclined to invest in them. Otherwise, they may benefit from national subsidy programmes. Additionally, SMEs that pay for SCORE services tend to use SCORE training and methods more effectively, leading to a better integration of enterprise improvement teams within their organizations.

3. A revised approach that emphasizes supply chain leaders' interest in enhancing governance, sustainability, and the quality of their suppliers may prove to be more effective. The buy-in of key actors in supply chains may be more substantial if the approach focuses more on supply chain integration and governance and due diligence requirements, especially the certification processes of SMEs.

4. The baseline situation in a country for a certain development objective should be assessed well before project design phase.

5. The SCORE M&E database is rich of information allowing interesting analytical work, though caution is needed in generating and use of data.

6. The sectoral technical centers (CTS) in Tunisia were implementing SCORE programme in the targeted companies that were already their clients. SCORE offers a development of the human dimension and staff participation in the production processes and decision-making in the SMEs, as an addition to the Kaizen programme.

The following best practices were used during project implementation to date:

1. ALTUTEX, a company in the textile sector, has developed an innovative internal technological solution: a problem detection application that identifies and instantly alerts users to production issues directly resulting from the application of SCORE methodologies.

2. The establishment of Enterprise Improvement Teams (EITs), tasked with developing and implementing concrete improvement plans, has been the most significant feature of the SCORE approach and training. These EITs have fostered ownership among SMEs regarding their improvement initiatives by including workers at all levels, positively influencing management-worker dialogue and cooperation on the shop floor.



3. SMEs effectively utilized the SCORE workplace collaboration module by scheduling daily and weekly team meetings, installing noticeboards and letter boxes for writing improvement proposals to enhance internal communication.
4. The SCORE programme successfully created significant synergies between technical centres and private consultants / SCORE trainers.