

# **Tunisia**

## **Mid-Term Evaluation**

**Thematic window: Youth, Employment & Migration**

**Programme Title: Engaging Tunisian Youth to Achieve the MDGs**

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## **Prologue**

The current mid-term evaluation report is part of the efforts being implemented by the Millennium Development Goal Secretariat (MDG-F), as part of its monitoring and evaluation strategy, to promote learning and to improve the quality of the 128 joint programs in 8 development thematic windows according to the basic evaluation criteria inherent to evaluation; relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability.

The aforementioned mid-term evaluations have been carried out amidst the backdrop of an institutional context that is both rich and varied, and where several UN organizations, working hand in hand with governmental agencies and civil society, cooperate in an attempt to achieve priority development objectives at the local, regional, and national levels. Thus the mid-term evaluations have been conducted in line with the principles outlined in the Evaluation network of the Development Assistant Committee (DAC) - as well as those of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). In this respect, the evaluation process included a reference group comprising the main stakeholders involved in the joint programme, who were active participants in decisions making during all stages of the evaluation; design, implementation, dissemination and improvement phase.

The analysis contained in the mid-term evaluation focuses on the joint program at its mid-term point of implementation- approximately 18 months after it was launched. Bearing in mind the limited time period for implementation of the programs (3 years at most), the mid-term evaluations have been devised to serve as short-term evaluation exercises. This has limited the scope and depth of the evaluation in comparison to a more standard evaluation exercise that would take much longer time and resources to be conducted. Yet it is clearly focusing on the utility and use of the evaluation as a learning tool to improve the joint programs and widely disseminating lessons learnt.

This exercise is both a first opportunity to constitute an independent "snapshot" of progress made and the challenges posed by initiatives of this nature as regards the 3 objectives being pursued by the MDG-F; the change in living conditions for the various populations vis-à-vis the Millennium Development Goals, the improved quality in terms of assistance provided in line with the terms and conditions outlined by the Declaration of Paris as well as progress made regarding the reform of the United Nations system following the "Delivering as One" initiative.

As a direct result of such mid-term evaluation processes, plans aimed at improving each joint program have been drafted and as such, the recommendations contained in the report have now become specific initiatives, seeking to improve upon implementation of all joint programs evaluated, which are closely monitored by the MDG-F Secretariat.

Conscious of the individual and collective efforts deployed to successfully perform this mid-term evaluation, we would like to thank all partners involved and to dedicate this current document to all those who have contributed to the drafting of the same and who have helped it become a reality (members of the reference group, the teams comprising the governmental agencies, the joint program team, consultants, beneficiaries, local authorities, the team from the Secretariat as well as a wide range of institutions and individuals from the public and private sectors). Once again, our heartfelt thanks.

The analysis and recommendations of this evaluation report do not necessarily reflect the views of the MDG-F Secretariat.

**MID-TERM EVALUATION**  
**ENGAGING TUNISIAN YOUTH TO ACHIEVE THE MDGs**

**YOUTH, EMPLOYMENT AND MIGRATION**  
**JOINT PROGRAMME**

**THE MDGF AND THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND MIGRATION (YEM)**  
**THEMATIC WINDOW**

**Mouna H. Hashem, PhD**

**October 2011**

## MDG ACHIEVEMENT FUND

### Engaging Tunisian Youth to Achieve the UN MDGs -TUNISIA

**UNDAF Outcome No. 3:** Between now and 2011, increase job opportunities mainly for youth, women and higher education graduates in order to obtain productive and permanent jobs with decent suitable revenues.

**Joint Programme Outcome(s):**

- Youth and employment migration policies and programs better adapted to the labor market trends and the specific needs of unemployed university graduates and unemployed low skilled youth in the target regions (Tunis, El-Kef, and Gafsa).
- University graduates have better access to decent job opportunities and engage in the creation of SMEs in the target regions (Tunis, El Kef, and Gafsa).
- Low skilled young men and women from El -Kef, Tunis and Gafsa have access to better employment and migration support services and decent job opportunities.

Programme Duration: 36 months  
Anticipated start/end dates: January 2009/ January 2012 Fund  
Management Option(s): Pass through  
Managing or Administrative Agent: UNDP  
Lead Agency: ILO Participating Agencies: IOM, UNDP, UNIDO, FAO Administrative Agent: UNDP National Lead Partner: Ministry of Employment. National Partners: Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Development and International Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Industry, Private sector (enterprises, Banks), nonprofit sector associations.

Total estimated budget*: Out of which: 1. Funded Budget: 2. Unfunded budget: US\$ 3.115.466 US\$ 3.115.466	Sources of funded budget: •Government •FAO \$681.002 •ILO \$660.565 •IOM \$442.445 •UNDP \$670.515 •UNIDO \$660.930
* Total estimated budget includes both programme costs and indirect support costs	

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## **ACRONYMS**

ANETI	National Agency for Employment
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GOT	Government of Tunisia
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JP	Joint Programme
JPD	Joint Programme Document
MDG-F	Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MOE	Ministry of Employment
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSC	National Steering Committee
ONE UN	One United Nations Programme
PC	Project Coordinator
PCT	Programme Core Team
PMC	Programme Management Committee
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
TOT	Training of Trainers
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
YEM	Youth, Employment and Migration

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the UN Joint Programme (JP) Youth, Employment and Migration (YEM): Engaging Tunisian Youth to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)” within the UN MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F) 2008-2010, has completed its second year, the MDG-F Secretariat is fulfilling its requirement in conducting a mid-term evaluation as required by the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy and the Implementation Guidelines of the MDG-F supported Joint Programme (JP). The evaluation was conducted by an international consultant and included a field mission to Tunisia from 7 to 17 June 2011.

The JP was conceptualized to respond to the swelling problem of unemployed youth and migration particularly in the poorer interior regions of Tunisia as well as the government’s weak inability to find effective solutions. The JP is principally an institutional capacity building project. Its overall objective is to increase employment opportunities for young people particularly in migration-prone areas through the sustainable creation of decent jobs and by strengthening the capacity of national and local governments to improve youth employment opportunities through strengthened policies and programmes. It is being implemented in three selected pilot regions: El-Kef, Gafsa and Tunis. Its primary target group is the poorest youth whose employment opportunities are the weakest; this comprises; i) unemployed low skilled youth and ii) unemployed university graduates.

Its implementers consist of five UN agencies (FAO, ILO, IOM, UNIDO, and UNDP), and national partners comprising the Ministry of Employment (MOE), Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), Ministry of Industry (MOI), Ministry of Development and International Cooperation (MDIC), Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) are carrying out the JP. According to the JP Document (JPD), the UNDP Resident Coordinator is the administrative agent of the UN core team while ILO is the lead agent; the national counterparts are led by the MOE.

The JP aims to achieve three outcomes:

Outcome 1: Better youth, employment, and migration (YEM) policies suitable to the labour market trends and the specific needs of unemployed university graduates and unemployed low skilled youth in the three target regions (El Kef, Gafsa and Tunis).

Outcome 2: University graduates have better access to decent job opportunities and engage in the creation of small and micro credit enterprises (SMEs) in the target regions.

Outcome 3: Low skilled young men and women from El-Kef, Gafsa and Tunis have access to better employment and migration support services and decent job opportunities.

To attain these outcomes, the JP includes two major project interventions:

- 1) enhancing the knowledge base of the YEM by improving the database quality, monitoring methods, feeding the system with more accurate information and developing capacity analysis to predict trends by specific training to relevant civil servants.

- 2) improving the skills of the beneficiaries as potential entrepreneurs and job seekers through the agencies and institutions involved in the process; and, implementing a circular migration mechanism for the targeted youth of the target regions.

By the end of its three-year timeline, its expected results include:

- (i) improved capacity of the GOT to investigate, monitor and analyse youth labour market indicators;
- (ii) improved capacity of local institutions (private, public, banks) to support and follow enterprise creation and development;
- (iii) inter-institutional mechanism able to design, monitor and evaluate youth employment and migration policies;
- (iv) permanent partnership mechanism between the public and the private sectors;
- (v) improved knowledge and understanding of integrated policies and measures to tackle the informal economy and their impact on migration;
- (vi) pilot system of circular migration tested.

## **Evaluation Objectives and Methodology**

The JP's evaluation objectives are:

- 1) to assess the programme's design including its internal and external coherence with the National Development Strategy, UNDAF, and the MDGs, and the degree of national ownership as defined by the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action;
- 2) to assess the efficiency of its management model in planning, coordinating, managing and executing resources allocated for its implementation;
- 3) to identify the programme's degree of effectiveness and contribution to the objectives of the youth, employment and migration thematic window, and the MDGs at the local and country level.

The evaluation methodology employed, as per TOR, is an expedited process relying on systematic fast-paced analysis to produce conclusions and recommendation within approximately three months.<sup>1</sup> It's also qualitative due to the scarcity of quantitative data. The unit of analysis is the JP, which entails evaluating the JP as a whole and not the separate activities of each UN agency. Three evaluation criteria were applied in assessing the JP performance: 1) project design; 2) process level; and, 3) sustainability and national ownership. Each evaluation criterion consists of a set of questions that were used as the evaluation instrument. Throughout the evaluation the JP document (JPD) was employed to assess the JP's implementation in relation to its design. Moreover, the evaluation was conducted in a participatory approach.

The evaluation included three phases; the first comprised a desk review of project documents, monitoring reports, etc. The second phase included the consultant's field

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<sup>1</sup> Generic Terms of Reference for the Mid-Term Evaluation of YEM Joint Programmes, General Context: the MDGF and the Youth Employment and Migration (YEM) Thematic Window; pgs: 6-9.

mission to Tunisia to collect primary data from interviews and focus groups discussions in the three pilot regions; the final phase entailed data analysis and report writing.

## **Findings and Conclusion**

1. **Design level:** Among the strengths of the project design is that it's based on a thorough diagnosis of youth, employment and migration within the country's economic, political and social context. It also demonstrates a top-bottom, bottom-top model i.e., at the top-bottom strategy involves capacity building of central and regional policy-makers and filling the knowledge gap concerning youth, employment and migration so as to provide supporting information to develop policies and programmes, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these policies that would reach the most vulnerable groups. On the reverse end, the bottom-up strategy involves implementing pilot projects promoting innovative entrepreneurship job creation schemes and a circular migration mechanism for the unemployed youth in the target regions. As a result, this model would sustain an ongoing link between the central and regional level, in addition to implementing mechanisms for scaling-up actions in support of the national development plans and the MDG agenda.

Another positive feature in the project design includes a private public partnership (PPP) strategy, i.e., establishing partnerships between government, non-government and the private sector to respond to the multifaceted dimensions of YEM.

Conversely, the project design also has some shortcomings affecting its implementation. For example:

- its objectives and outcomes are too broad and include too many activities;
- there is lack of a clear causal model demonstrating specific objectives with related activities/inputs leading to expected outputs and outcomes;
- there is no advocacy strategy in line with the objective of the communication and advocacy strategy as stated in the MDGF, or, mention of how crosscutting issues would be integrated into project activities;
- it prescribes the same intervention for target groups with dissimilar attributes-- the highly educated unemployed youth and the unskilled unemployed youth groups;
- its design fails to count civil servants as a third target group.

2. **Process level:** In assessing the efficiency in implementation, organizational structure and management of the JP in reaching its results, the evaluation takes into consideration the unfavourable political climate under which the JP has been functioning from its commencement until the present. Prior to the revolution of 14 January 2011, for example, the MOE imposed conditions and restrictions on the JP; whilst during and after the revolution, many activities were brought. Currently, the country is in a transitional phase with a lot of uncertainties in anticipation of the upcoming elections in October 2011. Many Tunisians migrants who had been working in Libya have also returned due to the crisis there and thus have compounded the problem of unemployment.

Efficiency: The JP's management and coordination model is set up whereby each UN agency has a Tunisian government counterpart. The JP designated the ILO to lead the UN agencies and the MOE as the lead coordinating agency. UNDP is the administrative agency; yet, each participating UN agency is responsible for its own component, implementation pace and finances. There are also several committees extending from the central to the regional levels with different roles and responsibilities interconnected to ensure coordination and flow of information among them; these include: the National Steering Committee (NSC); the Programme Management Committee (PMC); the Programme Core Team (PCT). In spite of this organizational structure, the evaluation found that it is not functioning accordingly due to the lack of effective leadership and coordination. This matter can be traced to two correlated factors; (i) a flaw in the project design that designated a non-resident agency, ILO, to take lead; (ii) miscommunication among the UN agencies at the process level.

ILO had expressed it did not want to take the leadership role but would provide backstopping and technical assistance from its Cairo office and subsequently assigned a programme assistant in Tunis. Although it assumed that this was the general understanding among the UN team, this was not the case. The UN team continued to expect ILO leadership and consequently during the first year, the JP did not have any official leadership, which caused delays in project implementation. Consequently, UNDP stepped in to fill the gap and has made much effort to keep the project ongoing, however, they are not interested in maintaining this role. UNIDO has also assisted in coordinating activities, yet it is a complicated task as each agency is functioning independently under the JP umbrella.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Another impediment to the JP is that it lacks an effective monitoring and evaluation system. Each UN agency oversees its own monitoring activities and uses its own format. This information is then forwarded to the PC who incorporates it into the JP monitoring reports. These reports are confusing for several reasons; (i) the JP indicators are vague and do not measure the project's progress but rather describe a list of activities performed during a certain period; (ii) the PC does not have monitoring and evaluation experience; (iii) the monitoring reports from each agency are not uniformly prepared, making this a more challenging task for the PC. As a result, the JP does not have follow-up mechanisms to verify the quality of the products, punctuality of delivery and progress of the JP towards achieving the envisaged results.

Targeting: Overall the JP is not reaching its designated target group/beneficiaries, i.e., "the neediest and those whose opportunities of employment are the lowest." There is a general attitude among the stakeholders that this is not a priority, yet, the gravity of this issue is if the beneficiaries are not the poor unemployed youth, how would the YEM contribute in its remaining timeline to the MDG 1, i.e., to eradicate poverty and extreme hunger by achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people?

3. **Results Level:** The findings of the JP's performance towards reaching its expected results by its completion date of 2012 are as follows:

i. Capacity enhancement of GOT: According to the JPD, this result was to be accomplished by civil servants' participation in conducting baseline studies so as to acquire skills in data collection, analysis, etc. Consequently, this would build the national database and allow them to develop indicators to investigate, monitor and analyze youth labour market trends. Yet the UN team overlooked the underlying purpose of these interventions and instead contracted independent consultants who selected their own research assistants rather than civil servants. In addition, the studies conducted by the JP do not comprise sufficient baseline data to serve the intended result.

ii. Capacity building of local institution: The different UN agencies have contributed to enhancing the capacity of local government agencies to support and follow enterprise creation and development primarily by training of trainers (TOT) but limited activities to the private sector or banks.

iii. Inter-institutional mechanisms: Government institutions such as the Ministries of Agriculture, Employment and Industry have been linked together by participating in the JP; their collaboration was exemplified by the manner in which they worked together in participating in the project design. They also occasionally participate in the JP workshops and forums regarding YEM. Yet, these activities have not resulted in establishing inter-institutional mechanisms.

iv. Partnerships: At the time of the evaluation there was no evidence of embedded mechanisms of partnership between the public and private sector, yet, it is important to mention that the previous regime did not encourage setting up these partnerships. Two factors may influence instituting these partnerships during the remaining JP's timeline; i) the upcoming Regional Planning for Employment activity, which depends on public-private partnerships at the regional level; ii) if the new elected government (October 23, 2011) policies pursue decentralization and promotion of civil society groups and political participation.

v. Improved knowledge: The JP activities have conducted several studies, which have been useful in designing project activities. Yet, they have not contributed to enhancing the capacity of the GOT in building its knowledge base and understanding of integrated policies and measures to tackle informal economy and their impact on migration predominantly because civil servants from partner ministry agencies such as ANETI did not participate in this research as prescribed in the JPD, instead the JP contracted independent consultants. Moreover, the studies were intended to collect baseline data during the first year of the JP so as to "fill the knowledge gap" in order to assist the GOT develop indicators that could be used for monitoring and analyzing labour market trends and formulating more appropriate policies and programmes. The studies produced did not provide this data.

vi. Pilot system for circular migration: The IOM has laid down the groundwork for conducting a pilot system to test circular migration; this includes identifying France and Italy as the two destination countries, developing a pre-orientation manual for each

country, networking with Tunisian executives and managers in France to get them involved and identifying private recruitment agencies. The IOM is now in the process of finalizing logistics to test this initiative by sending the first batch of 20 migrants to Italy.

### **Lessons to be learned**

1. Project design should be given sufficient time to produce a well articulated roadmap consisting of specific objectives with specific related activities, outputs and outcomes
2. The JP design should include interdependency and/or complementary activities so that coordination between the partners is embedded.
3. Project design must include implementing similar activities at the national and regional levels, such as enhancing capacities of government institutions to formulate policies and programmes for job creation, and training of civil servants.
4. Project design should solicit participation of the relevant regional actors to ensure that the programme is suitable at the local level.
5. Project design should make sure that all MDG-F components are included, for example, the JP lacks an advocacy strategy and crosscutting issues.
6. Absence of strong leadership significantly affects cohesion and implementation of the JP.
7. Flexibility in project implementation allows adjustments to challenges or changes needed that may improve effectiveness of implementation.
8. Lack of coordination between the UN team's activities affects efficiency of implementation and the credibility of the programme with its national partners.
9. Coordinating activities with appropriate pacing is important to attain the desired impact. Conversely, gaps of time between activities undermine their effectiveness and results.
10. The language used in implementation of activities and dissemination of information should be taken into consideration to guarantee full participation particularly at the local level.
11. Coaches should be chosen from the selected regions so that they are accessible to the beneficiaries.
12. Coaching should include expert/specialized individuals practicing in the different sectors and not civil servants who have more theoretical based information.
13. After completion of a programme intervention, implementers should assess the results of the intervention to ensure that it produced the desired output.

### **RECCOMENDATIONS**

1. A first priority is for the UN team to decide on who will be the lead agent for the JP second phase. Two possible options include: (1) The UN team can choose a leader from among themselves; or, (2) The JP can contract an international CTA.
2. The JP's timeline should be extended at no cost to make up for all the time lost due to the political crisis.
3. The JP stakeholders need to formulate a workplan jointly for its second phase indicating the activities of each agency, under which outcome and the expected outputs. This should be accompanied by a budget plan in effort to find ways of cost-

sharing and/or reduction of expenses. Activities that are not cost-effective should be substituted by other activities that could provide counselling for entrepreneurs for less cost such as group counselling.

Project design level:

4. Project design needs to be revised to include specific objectives that correlate with activities, the desired outputs and outcomes. It should also include assigning the UN team with complementary activities reflecting their competitive edge as to insert that they function as one project rather than several small independent projects. The UN team may need to get technical support for this activity.
5. The JP needs to develop appropriate monitoring indicators to measure the progress towards achieving its outcomes. This should be done during revision of the project design and could be performed by the same person providing the technical support. In addition, the stakeholders and PC should have a workshop to standardize their M&E approach and reports.
6. The JP needs to be decentralized and streamlined enabling its stakeholders at the central and regional level to work in sync towards achieving the JP outcomes.
7. The JP needs to develop criteria that define the target group as stated in the JPD, i.e., the neediest and whose opportunities for employment is the lowest.
8. The JP needs to include activities that respond to poor unemployed women and women migration. Emphasis should be in providing women with employment activities appropriate to their cultural setting and social challenges.
9. An advocacy and communication strategy needs to be incorporated in the revised project design.

Process level:

10. Entrepreneurship activities need alignment with government policies to encourage job creation. For instance, government providing low interest loans for the establishment of cooperatives or associations can carry this out. Pilot projects of cooperatives should include capacity development in management, finance and marketing; this includes training of TOTs to provide these services to beneficiaries.
11. SME development and circular migration pilot projects should be revised to be more cost-effective interventions. In doing so effectively would require PPP at the central and local levels to identify policies and programmes that are more sustainable and compatible with the market demands and political context.
12. Project activities should be continuous as to maintain their effectiveness to reach the desired output, in other words there should not be big gaps between activities aiming at the same outcome.
13. Training sessions should be conducted in Arabic also all project documents that are to be shared with the national counterparts should be translated to Arabic, including the mid-term evaluation report.
14. The role of the programme coordinator (PC) needs to be clarified and supported. It is essential that he receive support such as attending workshops on management, monitoring, etc. In addition, hiring an assistant as included in his TOR. Another option is to assign two focal points in each of the selected regions (El-Kef and Gafsa) to assist him in overseeing the JP activities.

15. The JP needs to pursue partnerships with the private sector to encourage their involvement, as they can make important contributions such as assisting in identifying effective training programmes for the youth that would correspond to the local job market demands and/ or offering internship programmes.
16. There is a need for new economic policies that redistribute economic development ventures and investments to the interior regions. This can include providing incentives to lure large companies to open/relocate to the interior regions and to hire from the local youth population. Pilot projects should also be aligned with these new policies.

Results level

17. The JP needs to improve its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) methods; there are two options on how this can be carried out: (1) hiring an expert to oversee the M&E activities of the JP; or (2) providing the PC with training in M&E. Moreover, the UN team should have a standard M&E methodology; consequently, it would be very useful to have a monitoring and evaluation workshop for the JP team.
18. The JP needs to place stronger emphasis on capacity development of policy makers, managers and staff of participating institutions.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

The UN Joint Programme (JP) Youth, Employment and Migration (YEM), “Engaging Tunisian Youth to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),” is within the UN MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F) 2008-2010, thematic cluster of “Youth, Employment and Migration” (YEM). The UN Joint Programme (JP) is composed of five UN agencies (FAO, ILO, IOM, UNDP and UNIDO). Its overall objective is to increase employment opportunities for young people particularly in migration-prone areas through the sustainable creation of decent jobs and by strengthening the capacity of national and local governments to improve youth employment opportunities through strengthened policies and programmes.

Tunisia ranks in the Human Development Index (HDI) 81 out of 169 countries, which is above average in comparison to its regional Arab neighbours. Impressively, Tunisia scores equally well in achieving most of its targets under the MDGs with the exception of the goal of decent and productive work for the youth. This is exemplified by its unemployment rate of 14%, with the largest cohort being between the ages of 20-29 years (42%).<sup>2</sup> A significant number are higher education graduates, which makes them more susceptible to longer periods of unemployment. For example, in 2007, 61% of the 2006 university graduates had not found jobs and about 30% of the 2003 graduates remain jobless.

The Government of Tunisia (GOT) prior to the revolution was aware of the seriousness of this problem; although it attempted to make some reforms, these measures were insufficient to close the growing economic disparities between the tourist-dominated coastal areas and the impoverished interior regions. In addition, the recent financial crisis has exasperated youth unemployment. Consequently, the correlation between lower employment opportunities, poverty and a growing informal economy has been a driving force of labour migration among the youth; for others who remained behind, their demand for change was the major force behind the revolution and the ousting of the President on 14 January 2011.

Although initiated prior to the revolution, the JP comes at an opportune time for the transitional government, which appreciates the urgent need to strengthen its institutional capacities to develop economic policies and employment services that would lead to decent

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<sup>2</sup> Institute National de la Statistique (INS), 2007.

and sustainable job creation for the youth, while also strengthening the capacity of the youth to start their own enterprises. With an estimated budget of \$3,115,466, the JP is to pursue this endeavour in partnerships with GOT, civil society and the private sector.

## 1.2 Evaluation Purpose and Objectives

As the JP of the YEM in Tunisia has completed its second year, the MDG-F Secretariat is fulfilling its requirement in conducting a mid-term evaluation as required by the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy and the Implementation Guidelines of the MDG-F supported Joint Programme (JP). Furthermore, due to the revolution of 14 January and the need to overhaul the country's economic, political and social programmes, the JP stakeholders considered it timely to conduct an evaluation so that the findings and recommendations could be incorporated in revising the JP to accommodate the evolving needs of the country post revolution. The evaluation, conducted by an international consultant, included a field mission to Tunisia from 7 to 17 June 2011.

The overall objective of the evaluation is to generate knowledge, identify good practices and make use of lessons learned that would enhance its implementation during its remaining timeline and its contribution to the MDGs. More specifically, the evaluation objectives include:

1. To assess the programme's design including its internal and external coherence with the National Development Strategy, UNDAF, and the MDGs, and the degree of national ownership as defined by the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action.
2. To understand how the JP operates, the efficiency of its management model in planning, coordinating, managing and executing resources allocated for its implementation. The analysis of this information would highlight factors of its success and limitations in inter-agency tasks within the One UN framework.
3. To identify the programme's degree of effectiveness and contribution to the objectives of the youth, employment and migration thematic window, and the MDGs at the local and country level.

## 1.3 Methodology

The evaluation was carried out in an expedited process, relying on systematic, fast-paced analysis to produce conclusions and recommendation within approximately three months.<sup>3</sup>

The evaluation methodology applies the three evaluation criteria in assessing the JP's performance, these include:

- 1) project design, which assesses the relevance and coherence of the project;

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<sup>2</sup> Generic Terms of Reference for the Mid-Term Evaluation of YEM Joint Programme, General Context: the MDGF and the Youth Employment and Migration (YEM) Thematic Window; pgs: 6-9.

- 2) process level, which focuses on the efficiency;
- 3) sustainability and national ownership.

Each evaluation criterion consists of a set of questions that were used as the evaluation instrument.<sup>4</sup> The unit of analysis is the JP, which entails assessing the programme as a whole and how the programme's activities contribute to the overall JP's performance and outcomes and not an evaluation of each UN agency's separate activities. In addition, as there is scarce quantitative data on YEM in Tunisia, the evaluation is qualitative consisting of primary and secondary data.

First phase of the evaluation included a desk review of the secondary data. This entailed analysis of project documents, monitoring reports, Programme Management Committee (PMC) meeting reports, project studies, annual reports and workplans, internal review reports and government project documents.

Second phase included primary data collection, which took place during the consultant's field mission to Tunisia including the programme's three selected regions: El-Kef, Gafsa and Tunis. Data collection included interviews, focus group discussions and observations. The evaluation instrument was used for the interviews with members of the JP's National Steering Committee (NSC), PMC, PC, external partners such as experts and representatives from the Tunisian Solidarity Bank (TSB); and during focus group discussions with the Programme Task Committee (PTC) and beneficiaries in El-Kef and Gafsa.

Additionally, the evaluation was conducted in a participatory approach encouraging all project partners to take an active role in sharing their experiences and views in the JP's achievements, constraints and recommendations. Moreover, throughout the evaluation, the Joint Programme Document (JPD) was employed to assess the JP's implementation in relation to its design.

### 1.3.1 Validation of Information

The evaluation was conducted in line with the ethical principles and standards established by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), as stated in the TOR. The evaluator crosschecking information with the various sources such as with programme implementers, partners, secondary data and national stakeholders carried out validation of the information.

## **2. DESCRIPTION OF INTERVENTIONS**

### **2.1 Initial Concept**

The JP, "Engaging the Tunisian Youth to Achieve the MDGs," was conceptualized to respond to the swelling problem of unemployed youth and migration particularly in the

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<sup>4</sup> Generic Terms of Reference for the Mid-Term Evaluation of YEM Joint Programmes, General Context: the MDGF and the Youth Employment and Migration (YEM) Thematic Window; pgs: 6-9.

poorer interior regions of Tunisia as well as the government's weak inability to find effective solutions. The JP's diagnosis of YEM in Tunisia highlighted three major attributes: 1) lack of available data and analysis that would enable the government to acquire knowledge on the needs of all the segments in the labour force particularly the youth and women; 2) a modernized placement service that responds to these needs; 3) analysis of public investments and policies that push young people to migrate.

The aim, therefore, was to strengthen government agencies providing services in enterprise creation and migration. In doing so, the JP was to contribute to the GOT's priorities in three policy frameworks:

1. The 11<sup>th</sup> National Plan for Social and Economic Development (NPSED).
2. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) particularly its outcomes concerning (i) more transparent and accountable governance and regional development; (ii) to promote partnerships for decent and productive work for youth through joint action.
3. The MDGs 1, 3 and 8, which entail:
  - MDG-1 Eradicate poverty and extreme hunger by achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all including women and young people;
  - MDG 3, Promote gender equality and empower women.
  - MDG 8 Promote partnerships for decent and productive work for youth through joint action.

The programme was to be carried out by five UN agencies (FAO, ILO, IOM, UNIDO, and UNDP), and national partners comprising the Ministry of Employment (MOE), Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), Ministry of Industry (MOI), Ministry of Development and International Cooperation (MDIC), Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA). The UN Resident Coordinator is to oversee the UN core team while the lead agent is the ILO; the national counterpart is led by the MOE.

## 2.2 Project Description

The overall objective of the JP is “to support Tunisia in its efforts to develop and enhance local capacities in migration-prone areas, through the sustainable creation of decent jobs and the promotion of local competencies in selected pilot regions.”<sup>5</sup>

Primarily, it is an institutional capacity building project. Its underlying strategy is to experiment with different methodologies within the existing institutional framework by implementing pilot projects; this also includes testing *best practices* identified in other countries and if successful be replicated nationwide.

Since the GOT in its own programme targets youth with higher education, the JP's primary target group would be the poorest youth whose employment opportunities are the weakest; this comprises i) unemployed low skilled youth and ii) unemployed university graduates.

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<sup>5</sup> YEM Joint Programme Document. pg. 19.

Furthermore, attention is to be given to young women who encounter additional discrimination in the labour market. The JP was also to be implemented in three different geographic zones selected on the criteria: needs and potential development capacities, readiness for ownership of the project and capacities to meet the needs of targeted young job seekers, and high outflow of migration. Consequently, the JP selected:

- 1) El-Kef, a rural region in the northwestern part of the country with the highest unemployment rate;
- 2) Gafsa, an impoverished phosphate mining area in the southwest. Although it has one of the largest phosphates mining industry in the world, it underwent major job cuts a few years ago, consequently compounding unemployment in the area. It is also in this region (2006) where the growing unemployment rates led young people to organize protests and demonstrations;
- 3) Tunis (greater Tunis), which is among the most dynamic economic regions and attracts large numbers of migrants from all over the country, yet also has a disproportionate number of unemployed. Over one fourth of the unemployed in greater Tunis are young men and women and first-time job seekers. Moreover, it has the highest outflow of international migration.

The JP entails three outcomes:

**Outcome1:** Youth, employment, and migration policies are better adapted to the labour market trends and the specific needs of unemployed university graduates and unemployed low skilled youth in the three target regions (El Kef, Gafsa and Tunis,).

Two lines of action will reach this outcome:

1. *Internal* institutional strengthening (conducting specific studies, providing technical assistance to staff, developing new methodologies and tools in regional labour observatories, conducting staff development programmes).
2. *External* institutional strengthening for civil society and not-for-profit sector promoting dialogue and a permanent mechanism of PPP.

**Outcome 2:** University graduates have better access to decent job opportunities and engage in the creation of small and micro credit enterprises (SMEs) in the target regions.<sup>6</sup>

**Outcome 3:** Low skilled young men and women from El-Kef, Gafsa and Tunis have access to better employment and migration support services and decent job opportunities.

To attain these outcomes, the JP includes two major project interventions:

1. enhancing the knowledge base of the YEM by improving the database quality, monitoring methods, feeding the system with more accurate information and developing capacity analysis to predict trends throughout specific training to relevant civil servants.

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<sup>6</sup> YEM Joint Programme Document. pg. 25

2. improving the skills of beneficiaries, who are potential entrepreneurs and job seekers through the agencies and institutions involved in the process; and, implementing a circular migration mechanism for the targeted youth of the target regions.

Implementation strategy of these interventions involve:

1. training of trainers (TOT), which will enhance capacities and expertise of front line government staff and non-governmental services and institutions responsible for matters of employment and migration.
2. training of beneficiaries (potential entrepreneurs and migrants) by the TOT.

A series of crosscutting issues are also included in the JP; these include:<sup>7</sup>

- International labour standards
- Environment
- Gender equality
- Social dialogue
- Good governance

### 2.3 Hypothesis of Change

The hypothesis of change of the JP is based on the premise that by the end of its three-year timeline its results would include:

- i) improved capacity of the GOT to investigate, monitor and analyse youth labour market indicators;
- ii) improved capacity of local institutions (private, public, banks) to support and follow enterprise creation and development;
- iii) inter-institutional mechanism able to design, monitor and evaluate youth employment and migration policies;
- iv) permanent partnership mechanism between the public and the private sectors;
- v) improved knowledge and understanding of integrated policies and measures to tackle the informal economy and their impact on migration;
- vi) pilot system of circular migration tested.

## 3. FINDINGS

Employing the evaluation criteria as the instrument ensured that the evaluation addressed all the issues set forth by the evaluation TOR and at the level of analysis demanded. Findings of the evaluation are grouped under each criterion: design level, process level and results level.

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<sup>7</sup> For more information on what these crosscutting issues involve, see the Joint Programme Document (JPD) pgs: 20-22.

## 3.1 Design Level

### 3.1.1 Relevance

The JP was designed with the objective to find solutions for the problem of the high rate unemployed youth and migration in Tunisia. In doing so, the JP would not only tackle a priority policy in its 11<sup>th</sup> National Plan for Social and Economic Development (NPSED) and the UNDAF but also meet its target for the MDGs.

The revolution of 14 January 2011, also known as the *Revolution for Dignity*, underscores the relevance of the JP to the GOT and the urgency of finding solutions for the unemployed youth. Consequently, the post-revolution transitional government considers the issues of YEM as one of the five national development priorities; this is demonstrated in its inclusion in the UN Bridges Plan.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, due to the populace high expectations post revolution, the transitional government is under pressure to show that it is diligently working to solve the problem of youth unemployment and migration and relies on citing the JP as their showcase.

Among the strengths of the project design is that it's based on a thorough diagnosis of youth, employment and migration within the country's economic, political and social context, such as:

- the inequitable distribution of economic investments which concentrated on the coastal region and marginalized the interior regions;
- the weak institutional capacity of the relevant ministries and their employment agencies in developing policies to generate job opportunities that correspond to the problems responsible to the large number of unemployed youth and migration; and, its inability to transform these policies into effective action plans;
- the educational system that does not relate to the labour market demands

According to the Joint Programme Document (JPD), the project design demonstrates a top-bottom, bottom-top model (Figure 1) whereby capacity building is the main strategy involving initiatives at the central and regional levels. At the top level this involves capacity building of central and regional policy-makers by filling the knowledge gap concerning YEM so as to provide them the supporting information to develop policies and programmes, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these policies and to attain the necessary skills to transform these policies into action plans that would reach the most vulnerable groups effectively and efficiently. On the reverse end, the bottom-up strategy involves implementing pilot projects promoting innovative entrepreneurship job creation schemes and a circular migration mechanism for the unemployed youth in the target regions. Successful pilot projects would then be adopted by government and replicated in

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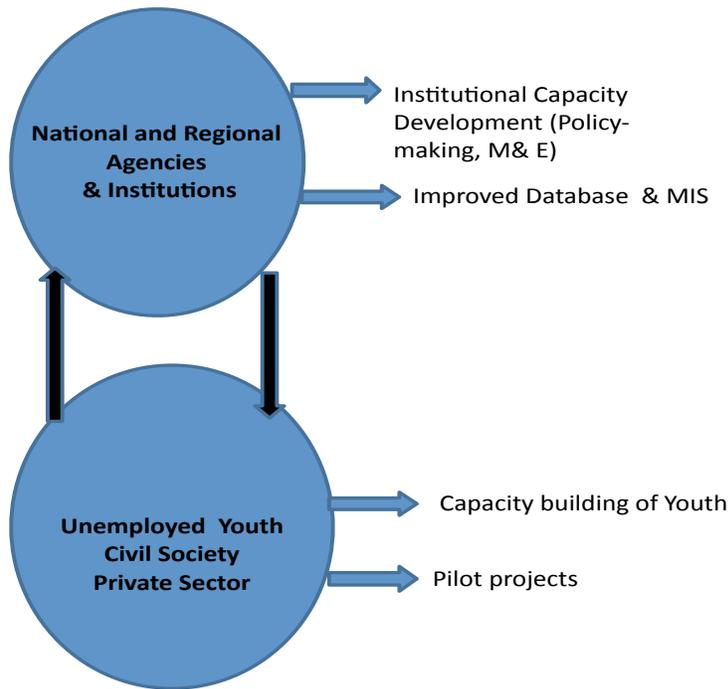
<sup>8</sup> The UN Bridge Plan is a temporary UN country team development framework until the election of a new president and government (September 2011). After the elections, a new NPSED and UNDAF will be finalized. The five development policy priorities include: regional development, democratic governance, emergency aid, youth and employment.

other governorates. Thus, the outcomes at each level-- top-bottom, bottom-top-- reinforce each other in finding effective ways for job creation for the youth, allowing policy makers to replicate successful pilot projects in other regions. As a result, this model would sustain an ongoing link between the central and regional level, in addition to implementing mechanisms for scaling-up actions in support of the national development plans and the MDG agenda.

Another positive feature of the JP design is its PPP (private public partnership) strategy, i.e., establishing partnerships between government, non-government and the private sector. This approach recognises the multifaceted dimensions of YEM and the need to involve different sectors in society as government cannot solve it alone.

Additionally, the JP design promotes innovation and experimenting with new solution-oriented methodologies to address the country's YEM development challenges.

**Figure 1**



**3.1.2 Challenges**

Conversely, the project design also has some shortcomings affecting its implementation. For example, the overall objective and outcomes are too broad and include too many activities. A project requires specific objectives that are (1) measurable and (2) attainable within the project's timeline. This is absent in the JP design. Consequently, there is a lack of a clear causal model demonstrating specific objectives with related activities/inputs

leading to expected outputs and outcomes. In addition, the JP's expected outputs are too numerous for the three-year timeline of the project and its resources (financial and human).

Second, the JP mentions a communication component, yet, it does not include an advocacy strategy in line with the objective of the communication and advocacy strategy as stated in the MDGF. Moreover, there is no mention of how crosscutting issues would be integrated into project activities.

Third, the JP overlooks the dissimilar attributes of the two target groups-- the highly educated unemployed youth and the unskilled unemployed youth groups-- such as level of education, skills and job qualifications; and yet prescribes the same intervention for both including capacity building for starting small and medium enterprises (SMEs). These two target groups should have separate interventions appropriate to their profiles. In addition, the JP comprises two major interventions; one for the two target groups of unemployed youth (educated and low skilled) and a second for civil servants at government employment agencies at the central and regional levels. Yet, the JP design fails to count civil servants as a third target group. Therefore, in reality the JP has three target groups.

During the evaluation debriefing, the JP's stakeholders acknowledged the shortcomings of the project design and expressed how its implementation has been a challenging task. There is also consensus that it should be revised. Additionally, a few stakeholders that were involved in the project design explained that it was formulated under a lot of pressure because of the very short timeframe they were given.

### 3.1.3 Ownership in the design

There is a strong sense of ownership of the JP among the GOT. Several staff from participating ministries interviewed expressed that they considered the JP a national programme as it represents their development priorities and policies. They were also involved in its design, which was the first time that several ministries had an opportunity to work together on a project. In addition, these ministries, under the leadership of the MOE, used the NPSED as their framework to determine the objectives and outcomes they sought from the JP. Moreover, it was designed to function within the institutional framework of government's agencies overseeing employment issues, consequently enhancing the capacities of the staff.

At the regional level, local authorities sentiments toward the JP design differ. First, their capacity development was limited to TOT. Second, they consider it a project formulated at the central level without soliciting their input and imposed on them. For this reason they see flaws in the JP components because it fails to take into account their specific needs. They explained, for example, that their programmes were provided from the central government; yet, they need training on how to plan their own programmes appropriate to their local labour market demands; this includes prioritizing the objectives and strategies, preparing workplans, coordinating activities and establishing public private partnerships to work towards achieving these objectives.

During the evaluation, the MOE representative acknowledged that they did not include input from local authorities in the pilot regions (El-Kef, Gafsa and Tunis) and emphasized that any revisions to the JP design would include the equal participation of the local authorities.

### 3.2 Process Level

In assessing the efficiency in implementation, organizational structure and management of the JP in reaching its results, an underlying consideration is the unfavourable political climate under which the JP has been functioning, from its commencement until the present.<sup>9</sup> For example, prior to the revolution of 14 January 2011, the government, particularly the MOE, imposed conditions and restrictions on the JP, consequently deviating the JP from its original design and process. For example, what partnerships should be formed between the national and international stakeholders, restrictions that the UN agencies get permission to travel to the selected pilot project regions and what studies should or should not be conducted; all of which caused delay in implementation of activities.<sup>10</sup> Whilst during and after the revolution, many activities were brought to a halt for approximately three months. Currently, the country is in a transitional phase with a lot of uncertainties in anticipation to what transformations will occur with the upcoming elections in October 2011. Many Tunisians migrants who had been working in Libya have returned due to the crisis there and thus have compounded the problem of unemployment.

#### 3.2.1 Efficiency

The JP's organizational structure depicting its management and coordination model is set up whereby each UN agency has a Tunisian government institution counterpart (Figure 2).<sup>11</sup> Funds for the implementation of the JP is administered by the UNDP, yet each participating UN agency is responsible for its own programme component and implementation pace, finances and disbursement of funds with its partners and counterparts.

Figure 2: Implementing partners and counterpart institutions

UN Agency	Tunisian Institutions
FAO	Ministry of Agriculture
ILO	Ministry of Employment
IOM	Ministry of Employment
UNDP	Ministry of Employment

<sup>9</sup> Throughout the evaluation report there are examples of the impact of the political situation on the JP.

<sup>10</sup> Travel restrictions applied to all international organizations and agencies and not just the JP UN team.

<sup>11</sup> The GOT designated the MOE as the lead coordinating agency of the JP, while ILO was to lead the UN agencies.

In addition, there are several committees extending from the central to the regional levels with different roles and responsibilities interconnected to ensure coordination and flow of information among them. These include:

- I. The National Steering Committee (NSC) composed of the UN Resident Coordinator (Chairperson), the representative of the Spanish Government and representatives of the Ministry of Development and International Cooperation (MDCI) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). Its responsibilities include overseeing the overall implementation of the JP and providing strategic guidance, including revisions of the JPD, annual work plans and budgets. The NSC is to meet twice a year.
- II. The Programme Management Committee (PMC) composed of representatives of the participating UN agencies and the MOE and chaired by the UNDP Resident Coordinator (RC), or his/her representative will co-chair the PMC with the designated representative from the MOE. Other national representatives are drawn from the ministries of Agriculture, Industry, Trade and Social Affairs. Participation is also open to local authorities, social partners and non-government organizations promoting the interests of the youth. The PMC is the principal coordinating and supervisory body for the JP implementation, in addition to providing policy guidance and recommendations concerning strategy and objectives. It is to meet quarterly and periodically review and oversee programme achievements and financial disbursements.
- III. The Programme Core Team (PCT) provides technical inputs, implementation management and prepares progress and monitoring reports, and is responsible for organizing the mid-term evaluation. It is composed of:
  - (i) The Programme Coordinator (PC), who is to work in close coordination with the Resident Coordinator, is responsible for overseeing the overall daily management of the programme; this includes ensuring that the project inputs are aligned to the JPD, the standards of quality, the pace and distribution of inputs and of sound result-based management practice.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the PC will prepare the PMC meetings, provide coordination and assistance to the PMC, follow-up on the agreed action points, prepare progress and monitoring reports and coordinate the preparation and clearance of reports prior to their submission to the NSC. The PC is also responsible for organizing the mid-term evaluation. The PC is to be supported by a Programme Assistant (PA).
  - (ii) The Core Team (CT) are specialists provided by each UN agency that have the functions to assist the PC on the development and/or adaptations

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<sup>12</sup> The PC is stationed at the MOE.

of methodologies and tools for youth employment policy development and implementation; and, training of trainers (TOT) of corresponding government agencies at the local level in the selected regions. Additional members include:

- A UN fellow (funded by UNDESA) was to work for the project activities of IOM and assist the PC for the implementation of the JP.<sup>13</sup>
- A junior professional officer from the MDG- F who would follow-up on FAO/Ministry of Agriculture activities, but will also participate in the CT and support the PC.
- The MOE is also to designate a coordinator from the Ministry to participate in the CT.

In spite of this organizational structure to manage and coordinate the JP, the evaluation found that it is not functioning accordingly; moreover, the lack of coordination among the programme implementers, particularly the UN team, is impacting the efficiency of the programme.

### 3.2.2 Challenges

The challenges that the JP is encountering in its management are evident in the following issues:

(1) **Absence of effective leadership of the JP.** All stakeholders acknowledge that the lack of leadership has significantly affected the JP's performance. This matter can be traced to a flaw in the project design for assigning ILO to take lead; and, miscommunication among the UN agencies at the process level. According to the JPD, the lead agency is ILO and the administrative agent is UNDP. Yet, the project should have not assigned a UN agency that does not have a country office or resident representative. For this reason, ILO did not want to take on this role and stated it would only provide technical assistance from its Cairo office. ILO assumed this was the general understanding among the UN team, yet it was not the case. The UN team continued to expect ILO leadership and consequently during the first year, the JP did not have any official leadership and the UNDP stepped in to fill the gap. UNIDO has also assisted in this endeavour. Conversely, the UNDP, who made much effort to keep the project ongoing, expressed during the evaluation that considered that as ILO has the competitive edge on employment and labour policy, they preferred that it (ILO) take on this role.

During the second year of the project, ILO assigned a programme assistant in Tunis; meanwhile, the Technical backstopping Officer in Cairo made several visits to the JP; two other technical officers from the Cairo office have also conducted missions to Tunis to discuss with the partners the JP's progress. ILO headquarters also sent a Youth Employment team mission.

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<sup>13</sup> The UN fellow was originally assigned to work for UNIDO and IOM, yet ended up working for only for one month with UNIDO; but continued to work for IOM on the JP from December 2008-December 2009.

At the national side, pre-revolution, the MOE representative played a very domineering role to the extent that he instructed the stakeholders on how the JP was to be implemented and everyone complied; this exemplified the authoritative political environment at the time; it also made the programme deviate from its original design. After the revolution and the changing of the guard, the new MOE representative has been very effective in collaborating with the JP, yet, its leadership role has been somewhat reserved; this can be explained by: (i) due to the transitional state of affairs of the current government, it is difficult for officials to make commitments within an environment of political uncertainties; (ii) the absence of a UN leader counterpart.

**(2) Lack of coordination among the participating UN agencies.** Working together on a MDG-F is a novel experience for the UN agencies and has proven to be a challenging task. As most representatives expressed, they are programmed to work within their own agency's mandate and the shift to a one UN joint programming is not an easy transition; this is further accentuated with the lack of leadership. In addition, the following issues have also hindered the UN team's coordination:

- i. The former MOE influenced the implementation of the JP sidestepping the project design and dictating how and by whom the activities were to be implemented. For example, project activities that included several agencies working together were changed and given instructions on who should participate in the different activities. The UN agencies could not insist otherwise.
- ii. Although the JP's management structure (i.e., NSC, PMC, PCT Task Forces and PC) is to facilitate coordination and flow of information, it has not been effective due to a contradictory feature in the JP, which includes that each UN agency in reality is set up to function independently. For example, each agency has its own ministry counterpart, its region to implement its activities and its freedom to implement its project component at its own pace and own budget to disburse as it sees fit. Consequently, this setting does not foster coordination but instead enables each agency to function autonomously. The end result is that the JP is more reflective of several UN agency projects being implemented under the umbrella of the JP. This process is impacting the programme's efficiency, which is demonstrated in frequent overlap in activities such as the same group of beneficiaries receiving training from two different UN agencies; or, discussing their project matters with national counterparts individually rather than as a one UN joined programme. Moreover, this lack of coordination is affecting the image of the JP and the UN team with its national partners at the central and regional levels.
- iii. There is little communication, sharing of information or exchange of experiences among the JP stakeholders. Although the PMC meets on a quarterly basis (and if needed, holds additional meetings), there is limited communication among them in between meetings. The NSC, on the other hand, has only met twice since the initiation of the JP in 2009. There is also little communication with the regional partners; most of the information they receive about the JP is from the PC, who frequently visits the pilot regions. Yet it is important to mention that the political situation, prior to the revolution, also made it very

difficult for the UN team members to visit the pilot regions because they were required to obtain government permission, which was a complicated task.

- iv. The PC, an important link to the JP's coordination, is functioning with many hindrances. For instance, his TOR is not clear and as a result there is general confusion among the UN team and himself on what he should and should not be doing. For example, there are no clear boundaries for his responsibilities, as the programme is not abiding by the TOR and he is given tasks ranging from overseeing implementation of activities in the selected regions to mundane administrative tasks. In addition, an assistant was never recruited; therefore he has many activities to juggle including travelling to the different project regions. Moreover, there is no project vehicle and therefore needs to make transportation arrangements for these trips. As a result, he is constrained in performing his real duties efficiently.

The culmination of the above factors is impacting the relationship with the national stakeholders. Local authorities and the PCT in El-Kef and Gafsa expressed their frustration for not being kept abreast of the status quo of the JP and the long intervals between project activities. For example, in Gafsa training of trainers (TOT) was implemented in 2009, yet since then there have been no follow-up activities with these trainers. On the other hand, consultants conducting studies for the JP visited these regions to solicit information from local authorities about employment opportunities, their needs, etc.<sup>14</sup> Inadvertently, this inquiry raised expectations that these studies may result in incorporating their needs and input in the JP. Yet, after a significant period of time with limited activity except for more studies being done and a paucity of information, it is hardly surprising to find negative sentiments taking root among local partners. For instance, one JP study was presented and discussed with the local partners in El-Kef and Gafsa.<sup>15</sup> In response, for example, the local partners in El-Kef provided their comments and requested they be incorporated in the final report, yet they never received a revised copy and therefore do not know whether their comments were incorporated. As a result, they will not endorse this study until they see that their comments were included.

Another important issue concerning the JP's communication with local authorities involves the use of French rather than Arabic. Members of the PCT expressed that miscommunication is frequent due to communications being in French rather than Arabic. In El-Kef, for example, in a local meeting conducted in French to introduce the project to local authorities, civil society and the private sector led to misunderstanding due to some local representatives comprehending that the JP was funding a project in their region. This misinformation became widespread in the area; subsequently, when no such funding took place, locals were angry and accused local authorities of seizing

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<sup>14</sup> Mongi Boughazal. *Dynamique De L'Emploi Dans Les Gouvernorats Du Kef Et De Gafsa: Identification Des Opportunités Et Des Obstacles Relatifs A La Création D'Emplois*. Avril 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Y. A. Fourati, M. Lassaâd. *Identification des Opportunités d'Investissements dans les Gouvernorats du Kef et de Gafsa*. 2010.

the project funds. Another example involves training of trainers (TOT), which was also conducted in French.<sup>16</sup> Although trainees could understand the instructor, they were inhibited in participating because they did not feel confident expressing themselves in French. Hence, even though Tunisia is francophone, it should not be taken for granted that people speak French fluently, especially in rural areas.

**(3) The pace of implementation of activities is relatively slow.** There are big gaps in between activities, consequently eroding the effectiveness of the output. Delays in project activities were mostly due to; (i) during the previous regime, the UN agencies needed permission from the government to visit the pilot regions, which is a complicated and lengthy procedure that caused delay; (ii) some project activities were implemented without appreciation of the impact of time and continuity in activities for more effective results. For example, TOTs that were trained in 2009 are still waiting to put their newly acquired skills to use before they are forgotten. In addition, studies conducted for the JP are also executed over a long period disproportionate to the life span of the project; for instance, a study being conducted on seasonal agriculture that was initiated almost a year ago was still not finalized at the time of the evaluation.<sup>17</sup> It is noteworthy that the MOA has substantial data on seasonal agriculture, which can contribute to decreasing the time span of the study. While, another study that has just begun on traditional artisanal tapestry has a timeframe of four months. As this study will be conducted post-revolution it will avoid all the government delays, consequently can be implemented in a more expedited mode. On the other hand, the JP is scheduled to end in May 2012. Hence, the output of these activities will not be efficiently used.

### 3.2.3 Targeting

Another important aspect in assessing the JP is its performance in reaching the required target group. Providing coverage to the designated beneficiaries contributes to the desired outcomes and reflects the efficiency of the JP. The performance of the JP in targeting its designated beneficiaries, however, is questionable. According to the JPD, the GOT is targeting the highly educated qualified unemployed youth; therefore, the JP's would target "*the neediest and those whose opportunities of employment are the lowest.*" Overall the JP has not focused on targeting this group.<sup>18</sup> The stakeholders expressed that even if their beneficiaries are not the poorest/neediest, the end result is the same since qualified unemployed youth are also susceptible to becoming impoverished. Aside from the merit of this hypothesis, two issues arise: 1) the programme is not covering the designated target group as defined in the JPD; 2) if the target group does not comprise the poorest unemployed youth, how would the YEM contribute to the MDG 1, i.e., to eradicate poverty and extreme

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<sup>16</sup> ILO has been the exception in having most of activities conducted in Arabic including translation of its documents.

<sup>17</sup> The first draft of the FAO study was completed shortly after the field evaluation in 2011.

<sup>18</sup> The exception is FAO, who has made effort in targeting the neediest.

hunger by achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people?

In addition, during focus group discussions with the beneficiaries, the evaluator found that some beneficiaries had the financial means to startup their SME but just wanted to benefit from the coaching, while a few others are above the age group defined as youth.

### 3.2.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

Each UN agency oversees its own monitoring activities. This information is then given to the PC who incorporates it into the JP monitoring reports. These monitoring reports, however, are confusing for several reasons; (i) most indicators are vague and do not measure the project's progress; (ii) the PC does not have monitoring and evaluation (M&E) experience; yet, it is another task expected of him as the JP does not have a M&E expert. An M&E template is used, however, input of data needs to be improved; (iii) a review of the independent monitoring reports of the separate agents revealed that they are not all uniformly prepared, making this a more challenging task for the PC.<sup>19</sup> According to the JPD, specific training on M&E participatory approach is part of the initial training of trainers; it would have been useful if the UN team and PC had been also included in this training.

As a result, the JP does not have follow-up mechanisms to verify the quality of the products, punctuality of delivery and progress of the JP towards achieving the envisaged results. Programme indicators function as follow-up mechanisms; yet, the JP lacks sufficient indicators, which is evident in the monitoring reports. In addition, indicators included in the monitoring reports are not data applicable to the RBM (Results Based Management) but rather describe a list of activities performed during a certain period.

### 3.2.5 Ownership

In spite of the issues concerning the management of the JP, the government considers it a showcase to demonstrate their ongoing efforts in finding solutions for the unemployed youth. The regional government, however, does not share this sense of ownership because it is not being implemented with their equal participation, as explained earlier. The MOE is planning to rectify this situation by ensuring the decentralization of the JP management to strengthen partnership with their regional institutions and local authority starting with revising the JPD.

Conversely, the intended youth beneficiaries also have an opinion towards the JP, as few have reaped its benefits. Most of the beneficiaries, who received training in El-Kef and Gafsa, have not been able to launch their SMEs as planned because they have not been able to obtain a loan from the Tunisian Solidarity Bank (TSB). The Bank has stringent conditions

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<sup>19</sup> According to the MDG-F Guidelines, it is recommended that the JP allocate 3 to 5% of the overall programme budget for M&E. MDG Achievement Fund Implementation Guidelines for the Joint Programme. June, 2009. pg.14.

for qualifying for a SME loan; the borrower, for example, must have a guarantor and a make a deposit of TD 5000. These requisites are prohibitive for the beneficiaries. In El-Kef where most loans are intended for agricultural oriented SMEs, the TSB also requires that the borrowers have trained at the Agency for Agriculture Investment Promotion (APAI) as they do not acknowledge the training provided by FAO, thus, adding on another impediment. An additional issue with the TSB is that even if a beneficiary qualifies for a loan, then if the Bank finds out there is a history of some family member who had defaulted in paying back a loan, it would use that to reject giving him/her the loan. As a result, most of these youth feel that they have invested their time in participating in the JP but are now trapped; not able to go forward and not knowing what to do next. Although they blame the TSB for putting them in this predicament, their attitude towards the JP is that it should have made arrangements with the TSB in collaborating with the project in giving loans at the project-planning phase.

The Bank's stance is that giving youth loans for SMEs is a high risk based on their previous experience whereby so many youths' businesses failed and led them to defaulting on their loans. Consequently, TSB position is that they must have strong guarantees to ensure that the loans would be paid back.

At the time of the evaluation, FAO and UNIDO were having separate discussions with the Bank on ways they might be able to facilitate loans for the programme youth beneficiaries.

### **3.3 Results Level**

#### **3.3.1 Assessment of Results**

As the JP has reached midterm, the evaluation assessed its performance towards reaching its expected results by its completion date of 2012. The results include:

- (i) Improved capacity of the GOT to investigate, monitor and analyze youth labour market indicators;
- (ii) Improved capacity of local institutions (private, public, banks) to support and follow enterprise creation and development;
- (iii) Inter-institutional mechanisms able to design, monitor and evaluate youth employment and migration policies;
- (iv) Permanent partnership mechanisms between the public and the private sectors;
- (v) Improved knowledge and understanding of integrated policies and measures to tackle the informal economy and their impact on migration;
- (vi) Pilot system of circular of migration tested.

The findings are as follows:

#### **i. Capacity enhancement of GOT**

Project activities toward improving the capacity of the GOT to investigate, monitor and analyze youth labour market indicators have not been significantly changed by the JP. According to the JPD, this result was to be accomplished by (1) civil servants' participation

in conducting baseline studies so as to acquire skills in data collection, analysis, etc; (2) collection of baseline data was to contribute to the national database so as to develop indicators that would enable civil servants to investigate, monitor and analyze youth labour market trends.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, this would enhance the capacity of the GOT to obtain the necessary information to formulate policies and programmes that correspond to the needs. Yet the UN team overlooked the underlying purpose of this intervention and instead contracted independent consultants who selected their own research assistants rather than civil servants. Moreover, the studies conducted by the JP, which serve the programme, do not comprise sufficient baseline data to serve the intended result.

ii. Capacity building of local institutions

Different UN agencies in the JP have contributed to enhancing the capacity of local government agencies to support and follow enterprise creation and development but limited activities to the private sector or banks. The following are some examples of activities carried out:

- FAO, in an agreement with the Agency for Agriculture Investment Promotion (APIA), trained 12 agriculture incubators in El-Kef and Tunis; with the Technical Centre for Organic Agriculture, 36 technicians/engineers in Kef and 21 technicians/engineers in Gafsa were trained to promote organic agriculture farming; a partnership was established with the Association of Development Bou Makhlouf in El-Kef to monitor and support beneficiaries to start agriculture micro projects. An orientation workshop on Market Analysis and Development (MAD) was also conducted for facilitators and field extension workers to better understand principles of sustained income- generating processes through the use of the MAD approach as a planning tool. An expert was also contracted to identify the needs of Milk Collection Centre of Gafsa in order to restart it for employment generation.
- ILO hired three coaches and a coach manager who trained 76 candidates, out of which 11 have opened small businesses and still are being followed up by coaching; another 27 beneficiaries are expected to open their businesses during the summer of 2011.
- IOM provided three TOT sessions; each targeted 100 employment and migration advisors from the National Employment Agency (ANETI). This training included TOT in the pre-departure orientation manuals for migrants leaving for France or Italy.
- UNIDO conducted three TOT sessions in El-Kef, Gafsa and Tunis; these sessions included institutions such as ANETI, L'API, Les Pepinieres d'Enterprise, L'Espace Entreprendre and the Business Centre. Their SME development approach includes a counselling value chain model; this entails, for example, taking 3 to 4 trainers from each institution and train them in enterprise creation and development; while a selected number of youth are trained by counsellors (aka coaches) in enterprise creation and are constantly followed by the counsellors until they receive funding. Even after the youth's creation of SME, they continue to receive post counselling. In addition, training was given to 60 executives of entrepreneurship development

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<sup>20</sup> At the time of the evaluation, two additional studies were being conducted by FAO and UNIDO, which also did not include participation of civil servants.

institutions. UNIDO also has ongoing negotiations with the TSB in effort to facilitating loans for the youth, and aim to set-up a fund for enterprise creation.

- FAO, ILO, UNIDO and UNDP conducted a joint activity “*Salon de la Creation et du Development Technologique des Entreprises*” in Tunis in October 2010.<sup>21</sup> Each agency selected a number of entrepreneurs (30 from El-Kef, Gafsa and Tunis) and national stakeholders to participate. UNIDO also invited youth entrepreneurs from Bahrain (9), Lebanon (8) and Iraq (10). The workshop discussed best practices in entrepreneurship development and examples of successful case studies. Fourteen youth from El-Kef, Gafsa and Tunis were also invited by UNIDO to attend the HP Learning Initiative for Entrepreneurs (LIFE) training module in finance, which also includes training entrepreneurs practical uses of IT to solve daily business challenges.

iii. Inter-institutional mechanisms

Government institutions such as the Ministries of Agriculture, Employment and Industry have been linked together by participating in the JP; their collaboration was exemplified by the manner in which they worked together in the project design. They also occasionally participate in the JP workshops and forums regarding YEM. As of yet, these activities have not led to establishing inter-institutional mechanisms.

iii. Partnerships

At the time of the evaluation there was no evidence that there were embedded mechanisms of partnership between the public and private sector, however as mentioned earlier, the pre-revolution political environment also played a role in not encouraging formation of such partnerships. Yet, two factors may influence establishing these partnerships during the remaining timeline of the JP; first, the upcoming Regional Planning for Employment activity, which depends on public-private partnerships at the regional level, may promote strengthening these partnerships; second, the policies of the new elected government (October 23, 2011). For instance, if efforts towards decentralization, promotion of civil society groups and political participation are encouraged by the newly elected government, these partnerships are likely to be sustainable in a more open political environment.

iv. Improved knowledge

The JP activities implemented so far have not contributed to enhancing the capacity of the GOT in building its knowledge base and understanding of integrated policies and measures to tackle informal economy and their impact on migration. This activity was to be completed during the first phase of the JP; therefore, it is doubtful that it will achieve this result unless there are planned activities during the remaining timeline.

v. Pilot system for circular migration

The IOM has laid down the groundwork for conducting a pilot system to test circular migration; this includes identifying France and Italy as the two destination countries; developing a pre-orientation manual for each country; networking with Tunisian

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<sup>21</sup> UNIDO was the lead agency in this activity.

executives and managers in France to get them involved; and identifying private recruitment agencies. The IOM is now in the process of finalizing logistics to test this initiative by sending the first batch of 20 migrants to Italy. It should be mentioned that this testing of circular migration might not proceed; if it doesn't, it would most likely be due to external factors such as the ongoing political events in the region, or new anti-migration laws in France and Italy that would derail this test.

### 3.3.2 Assessment of Effectiveness

The JP by midterm has accomplished conducting some of its principal outputs during its first phase; these include baseline studies, TOT, coaching, innovation and SMEs. Assessing the quality of outputs is best determined by whether they will lead to the desired outcomes.

The evaluation findings include the following:

#### Baseline studies

The studies conducted for the JP were beneficial to the project in providing information about the programme's selected regions and were/are being used for design of project activities.<sup>22</sup> However, these studies fell short of being implemented as described in the JPD; consequently, they will not produce the expected output 1 contributing to Outcome 1.1. The following points further exemplify how these studies do not meet the requirements as set in the JPD:

- (i) Civil servants from partner ministry agencies such as ANETI did not participate in this research, consequently, this activity did not contribute to the capacity development of government agencies as prescribed in the JPD.
- (ii) The studies were intended to collect baseline data during the first year of the JP so as to "fill the knowledge gap" in order to assist the GOT develop indicators that could be used for monitoring and analyzing labour market trends and formulating more appropriate policies and programmes. The studies produced do not meet these demands.
- (iii) The studies conducted do not provide sufficient information on the poor and vulnerable as is also required. This information is important because the vulnerable and marginalized unemployed youth are the JP's target group; therefore, their identification and understanding of their needs are essential to provide them with appropriate services for enhancing their skills for employment and tackling migration.

Therefore, as these studies have not produced the desired output, the evaluation cannot consider this output meeting the desired effectiveness. It is also unexpected that the deficiency in this output is irreversible since the phase for collecting baseline data for the JP has been completed during the first phase of the project.

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<sup>22</sup> UNDP had the studied conducted. Dynamique De L'Emploi Dans Les Gouvernorats Du Kef Et De Gafsa: Identification Des Opportunités Et Des Obstacles Relatifs A La Creation D'Emplois. Avril 2010. And, Identification des Opportunités d'Investissements dans les Gouvernorats du Kef et de Gafsa. 2010.

### Innovation

The need for the JP to solve critical problems is clearly urgent, calling for new and innovative solutions for problem solving youth unemployment and migration. Innovation is also a “mantra” in the MDG-F. Yet, there are mixed findings on the JP’s performance on innovation. Several activities implemented by FAO such as training in establishing incubators and the Market Analysis and Development exhibit innovative approaches. During the evaluation, UNDP and ILO were jointly preparing to implement the Regional Planning for Employment activity, which also appears to take on an innovative approach. It’s based on a bottom-up model with the objective of enhancing local capacities of government and non-government groups commencing at the regional/local level to make their own plans for employment generation. However, since this project is still being developed, it is too premature to include in the evaluation.

The IOM initiatives for circular migration are innovative. This includes pre-departure training packages for migrant beneficiaries including legal, linguistic and socio-professional orientation manuals for each country. In addition, the IOM is training youth in skills in demand in France and Italy. The current pilot project being prepared is to send twenty beneficiaries to work in one of these countries for six months to a year. Once they return, they will receive a re-orientation to reintegrate in their villages and additional support to set up a small enterprise if they desire to do so. A positive feature of this project is that it is linked to migration initiatives of the GOT and agreements made with the government of France and still under discussion with Italy. Because there is no signed agreement with the government of Italy, as of yet, IOM has located Italian placement agencies that would assist in finding jobs for the youth in Italy and manage logistics, such as getting visas.

Then again, as innovative as this project may be, its success is not guaranteed due to the following; 1) this project was designed prior to the financial crisis, hence, the current economic situation in these European countries and problems of high rates of unemployment makes it doubtful that they would hire labour from abroad; 2) the political events in the Middle East and North Africa have resulted in a high influx of migrants particularly to Italy, making it uncertain that the Government would accept more migrants; 3) the current wave of *Islamaphobia* in Europe makes it doubtful that they would want to recruit labourers from Arab countries when they have a choice of recruiting Eastern European. IOM, however, believes that recent documents issued by EU institutions (such as the EU Parliament and EU Council) indicate that they be more receptive for the implementation of circular migration agreements between the EU and North Africa. Both opinions (the evaluator’s and the IOM) should be taken into consideration, as the issue of immigration is a politically sensitive subject in the EU politics frequently vacillating. Yet undoubtedly promoting circular migration could reduce irregular migration and would be in the interest of the countries of departure and destination.

Another important issue is the high cost of this initiative; for example, the budget allocated for the twenty returning beneficiaries is approximately \$80,000. Most of this amount is designated to assist them reintegrate into their villages (i.e., if they do return) professionally such as assist them in setting a SME if they choose to do so. The cost-effectiveness and efficiency of this pilot is questionable. For example, how could it be ascertained that the employment experience they attained while in France or Italy

necessarily qualifies them to begin an SME? While, if the financial assistance were for professional reintegration such as training, would this not include a duplication of assistance since an objective of their migration to Europe was also to attain professional training?

On the other hand, there is a crisis situation in Tunisia with the high rate of returnee migrants and the need to find them employment. The JP, particularly the IOM, should seriously consider weighing the priorities and the cost-benefits in sending twenty youths to Europe for six months to a year versus using their funds to assist the returnees find employment. This does not imply eliminating circular migration as it is an important innovative pilot and the findings will provide valuable lessons to be learned; but rather to diversify some funds to assist the influx of returnee migrants, who have further compounded the issue of unemployment.<sup>23</sup>

Most of the other activities implemented during the first phase of the JP, focused on TOT and coaching youth to start-up SMEs. Almost each agency (FAO, ILO, IOM, UNIDO) is implementing one or a combination of these activities as they relate to their mandate in the selected target regions. Yet, the government was already practicing these activities prior to the JP; therefore, they cannot be described as innovative.

### Coaching

Coaching includes one-to-one training for almost one year. It follows a value chain model beginning with guiding the potential entrepreneur in identifying a SME project and writing a loan proposal to following-up with him/her after they have started their enterprise. Interventions of coaching, as of yet are not demonstrating substantial contribution to problem-solving or alleviating youth unemployment; it is also a costly intervention. Beneficiaries interviewed in El-Kef, for example, were critical about the usefulness of coaching. The coaches do not reside in the same regions as their beneficiaries (with the exception of coaches in Tunis who coach beneficiaries in Tunis), then there are large gaps of time between each visit, and in most cases these visits are for a short duration (e.g. 15 minutes). Beneficiaries complained that this is insufficient time and they are left feeling frustrated for not having the needed support in preparing their proposals to submit for their SME bank loan. Another issue highlighted during the interviews and focus group discussions is that coaches are not specialized in any specific profession (most of them are civil servants) and do not have hands-on entrepreneurial experience to give the technical advice needed. Consequently, they are usually unable to counsel beneficiaries with information that corresponds to their SME area of interest while preparing their loan proposal and more importantly make them aware and prepared for the real challenges that lay ahead in starting a small enterprise. Therefore, these findings raise the issue of how cost-effective and efficient it is to continue and whether there are other options of counseling and support.

### Training of Trainers (TOT)

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<sup>23</sup> Since the submission of the first draft of the JP Evaluation Report, the IOM has revised its budget to include assistance to the returnee migrants.

TOT was conducted for outputs under Outcomes 2 and 3. TOT has contributed to enhancing the capacities of public employment agencies such as ANETI and APAI in the services they offer to the unemployed youth. For example, the staff believes it improved their communication skills in dealing with the youth and how to oversee their development of entrepreneur ideas to the launching of SMEs using a value chain process. Representatives from these agencies expressed that it would be useful that a training curriculum manual be developed as to continue to use after project completion.

### SME

The evaluation also found that SME's, the underpinning problem-solver for the unemployed youth in the JP, is not demonstrating that it's the most appropriate solution on the ground. Prior to the JP, the GOT had experimented with promoting entrepreneurship for the unemployed youth; they had also given them seed money to launch their SMEs, yet the survival rate of these SMEs was very low. With the JP, beneficiaries are having a very difficult time getting loans to launch their SMEs. Although one could argue that the JP has improved their capacity and provided them with better support through coaching, the effectiveness of these activities has been limited. Consequently, the conclusion can be made that the risk of these SMEs surviving and/or the youth defaulting on their loans has not significantly changed from the time the GOT had undertaken its own SME activities.

It would have been an added value if the JP examined what were the primary causes for SMEs poor survival rate and based on this information tailored interventions that may decrease the risk of their failure.

The TSB is also not confident that the JP beneficiaries are in a better situation to qualify for SME loans, and have become even more rigorous in their requirements making it more difficult for these youth to qualify for loans especially those in El-Kef, who are from a poorer agricultural region. ILO beneficiaries seem to have had the most success in beneficiaries getting loans and having launched their SMEs. For example, 11 have opened small businesses and another 27 are expected during summer of 2011. There is some indication that their success is due to the fact that these beneficiaries are from Tunis and occupy a relatively higher socioeconomic status, thus, they are better able to pay the bank's 5% required down payment.

Overall, the evaluation found that promoting SMEs for the unemployed youth is a short-term solution suitable for a small scale population but not as a national strategy that would solve the problem of the thousands of youths that graduate from university yearly and need employment. Furthermore, the assumption that highly educated youths or semi-skilled youths, with minimum work experience, if any, are ready to take on the responsibility of running their own small enterprises is an assumption, which previous experiments do not support. Representatives from the MOE also expressed their lack of optimism about this outcome. Therefore, there is a need to find more long-term solution(s) that tackle the core issue of unemployed youth particularly those in the poorer regions of the country by such strategies as promoting more appropriate economic policies that include equitable distribution of investment to the interior regions. After all it is due to the previous regime's continuous marginalization of these regions that created economic disparities leading to rising poverty levels, unemployment and migration.

### Gender mainstreaming

The JP has no specific strategies for gender mainstreaming, similar to the other crosscutting issues, yet, it appears by default women participation in the JP is significant. Overall the evaluation observed that women are well represented in the project; for example, in the UNIDO component almost 50% of the beneficiaries are women. UNIDO, who is in the process of conducting a study on the value chain of women's carpet production, will subsequently implement a pilot project involving a cooperative for women's carpet trade. Similarly, ILO activities also include approximately 50% women receiving coaching for SME.

During a workshop provided by FAO in El-Kef, they realized that women's participation was low, the reason being that the place of the training was too far from their village to attend. Consequently, FAO made arrangements to provide training for women in their village. Some stakeholders expressed that it may be more difficult for women -- particularly in rural areas -- to establish small enterprises individually because of their family responsibilities and therefore it may be more suitable for them to work collectively, such as having an association or cooperative. UNIDO is in the process of implementing a pilot project for women involved in carpet production and establishing a cooperative. As of yet, IOM activities have only focused on men migration when women migration is also an issue that needs to be addressed. Women and migration is a more socially complex issue, which would require first studying; yet, this may be dependent on whether the remaining project budget permits pursuing this activity.

### **3.4 Sustainability**

The JP is considered one of the most important projects in Tunisia due to the transitional government's commitment to finding solutions for the unemployed youth after the revolution. At the policy level, the JP has built-in mechanisms of sustainability as it was designed within the framework of the national policies, the UNDAF and government's commitment to reaching its MDG targets. Moreover, the JP activities are implemented within the existing national institutions overseeing employment matters. Its strong national ownership of the programme reflects its coherence with the Paris Declaration and the ACCRA Agreement. National stakeholders expressed that they plan to adopt the successful outputs of the JP after its completion and use them as a base to build on additional national programmes. They also plan to request financing for these future programmes from international donors and the World Bank.

At the project level, as the JP worked within already existing government agencies, such as providing capacity development of TOT, these activities will be sustainable as these employees will continue to use these acquired skills, however, developing training manuals would further ensure the sustainability of these activities after project completion.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The JP represents an important exercise towards the reform of one UN. In this case, it demonstrates the challenges and complexities involved, which provides important information to the UN planners and policy-makers in equal measures. As different UN staff members expressed, they are too accustomed to working within their own mandate; consequently, to break out of this mould will take time. Lack of leadership has also allowed each UN agency to continue working separately. As the evaluation explains there needs to be embedded mechanisms in the project design such as interdependent activities requiring coordination and collaboration among the various UN agencies since it is too soon at this stage to expect it to be a voluntary practice.

There are two principal interventions according to the JPD, the first being:

*“Enhancing the knowledge base of the YEM by improving the database quality, monitoring methods, feeding the system with more accurate information and developing capacity analysis to predict trends throughout specific training to relevant civil servants.”*

The JP has assisted the GOT in highlighting weak attributes in their institutional capacity that are hindering developing effective policies and programmes that would assist the youth find decent and sustainable employment. During the design level, which required inter-ministerial participation, participating ministries were given an opportunity to work together in formulating a programme within the framework and aligned with their national development plans. It also demonstrated to them how certain socio-economic issues are multifaceted and therefore require public policy that includes partnerships with different government institutions, civil society groups and the private sector.

The issue of YEM is a relatively new development phenomenon for the GOT and its seriousness has been confirmed in the recent political events, yet, there is scarce data on YEM, which makes it more challenging to know how to articulate policies that would effectively tackle these issues.

The JP has already taken a first step by assessing the Observatoire; based on these findings the JP must now pursue strengthening the institutional capacity of the Observatoire. These activities should include training of relevant government staff at the central and regional/local levels in data collection to build the database and analysis and developing labour market indicators. Another activity involves enhancing the capacity of policy makers in formulating policies and programmes to respond to the needs of YEM. Thus, the JP implementers must collectively identify the requirements of such activities as appropriate training, resources and technical experts-- national or international -- that would enable relevant government staff at the central and local level to acquire these specific skills.

A communication and advocacy campaign for the JP and its link to the MDG-F was also not implemented during the first phase of the project. The importance of this campaign in Tunisia would have helped promote government activities regarding the YEM and its impact on eradicating poverty, gender equality and joint partnership. Disseminating

information publicly concerning such activities and policies are important especially during times of political turmoil as they make the public aware of government actions and solicit the involvement of non-government and private partnerships.

The second programme intervention entails:

*“Improving the skills of beneficiaries, who are potential entrepreneurs and job seekers through the agencies and institutions involved in the process; and, a circular migration mechanism for the targeted youth of the target regions.”*

Similar to the previous intervention, this second intervention based on the evaluation findings needs to be reconsidered. Innovation is an important aspect but was limited in the JP activities. SMEs and circular migration pilot projects should be reformulated to be more cost-effective interventions. In doing so effectively would require PPP at the central and local levels that would enable the JP to identify policies and programmes that are more sustainable and compatible with the market demands and political context.

At a policy level, there is a need for new economic policies that redistribute economic development ventures and investments to the interior regions. Incentives, such as tax deductions or subsidized space for the first couple of years, could be offered to lure large companies to open in the interior regions and to hire a certain portion of the local youth population. This is a core pre-requisite that without smaller pilot schemes may not endure. At a programme level, pilot projects should be aligned with these new policies. Similarly, companies that establish internship programs for participating in improving skills of the youth could also receive incentives.

At the process level, the efficacy of the JP has been compromised primarily due to the lack of leadership and will continue to do so if a decision is not made soon as to who should lead it. The project design erred designating ILO as it is not a resident agency or have a country representative. UNDP has stepped in to fill the vacuum yet it is already the administrative agent and the Resident Representative is on the NSC. Consequently, it is not in the JP's benefit to continue to depend on UNDP for leadership, as it would only overload it with responsibilities. The critical question, therefore, is who should lead the JP? This is a crucial matter that needs to be given immediate attention in the second phase of the project. There are not many options, for example, the UN team can (1) decide among themselves who could be the lead agent; or (2) contract an international chief technical advisor (CTA) to oversee the JP's management, implementation and coordination. The JP stakeholders need to consider these options or come up with others in finding someone to lead the programme.

In addition, the role of the programme coordinator (PC) needs to be clarified and supported. On the one hand, this is issue correlate with the lack of leadership, as he should be working with him/her in overseeing the progress of the project. Consequently, without project leadership the PC is in a confusing situation, a sentiment shared by the PC and the stakeholders.

A recent development since the submission of the first draft of the evaluation report (July 2011) has been the resignation of the PC. Consequently, there are now two posts that need

to be filled (JP leader and PC). One consideration is to combine these two posts into one; this entails having an international CTF to lead, manage and oversee project activities. There are advantages to this third option. For instance, the JP is an additional task for each UN agency to deal with in addition to their agency's programme. Accordingly, for any representative to take leadership will be an overload and may not be in the best interest of the JP. Yet, a CTA who is only responsible for the management of the JP could improve its implementation by taking lead in orchestrating coordination of activities and their alignment to the outcomes, oversee the JP's management (budgeting, workplans, monitoring and evaluation activities, etc.) and advocate that the UN agencies work as one. At a project level, it is critical that the JP reaches the correct target group in the remaining activities or else the programme will not succeed in contributing to MDG 1. In addition, although women were well represented in many of the JP activities, they were mostly the highly educated. UNIDO is in the process of tailoring a project for poor rural women in Gafsa, which would include establishing a carpet production cooperative. Moreover, establishment of cooperatives and associations have been identified as good practices in several countries in the region and their rate of success have proven to be better than individual SMEs. Other UN agencies should also consider the benefits of encouraging entrepreneurship through cooperatives. The FAO in Egypt, for example, had a project, the Rural and Agricultural Development Communication Network (RADCON), which continues to be sustainable several years after project completion.<sup>24</sup> This project exemplifies a pilot project that was innovative, sustainable and scalable. It would be particularly appropriate to El-Kef because it is known for its high IT human resources and Cyberspace Park. The JP/ FAO should explore this project and if it can be modified to include an agriculture-IT pilot project to enhance agriculture production and marketing for youth employment in El-Kef.

The JP is of great importance to Tunisia and relevant to the ongoing political crisis and the soaring socio-economic needs, yet, it has been repeatedly disrupted with the ongoing political events. The JP has almost one year left in its timeline. Consequently, major steps need to be taken to enhance its activities as to get the desired outcomes in the remaining time.

## **5. LESSONS**

There are lessons to be learned from the JP's experience, which could be incorporated in the remaining timeline of the JP to overcome some of its challenges and enhance its implementation. These lessons learned are highlighted in the design and process level of the JP.

### Design level:

1. Project design should not be an expedited exercise, as was the case, rather, sufficient time should be given to produce a well- articulated roadmap consisting of specific objectives with specific related activities, outputs and outcomes. In

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<sup>24</sup> RADCON is an integrated agriculture project, which includes extension and IT communication.

addition, indicators measuring these relationships should be determined during the design level so as to monitor the progress of the project towards achieving its outcomes.

2. Joint programmes should encompass a design whereby there is interdependency and/or complementary activities as to have embedded mechanisms to ensure coordination between the partners.
3. For a programme to produce the desired outcomes at the central and local levels, the project design must include implementing the similar activities at both levels. For example, to enhance capacities of government institutions to formulate policies and programmes for job creation for youth should include training of civil servants at the central and local levels.
4. To ensure that the programme is suitable at the regional and local level, project design should solicit participation of the relevant actors at the local level.
5. Project design should make sure that all MDG-F components are included; in this case, for example, the JP lacks an advocacy strategy. The UN team has not paid attention to this component until recently.

#### Process level:

6. The political environment directly impacts project implementation and its pace. Consequently, there should always be flexibility in the process as to adjust to these challenges. The JP has been successful in doing that.
7. The absence of strong leadership significantly affects cohesion and implementation of the JP.
8. Lack of coordination between the UN team's activities affects efficiency of implementation. Furthermore, this is reflected in the field and affects the credibility of the programme with the national partners.
9. Coordinating activities with appropriate pacing enhances better project effects. Conversely, gaps of time between activities undermine their effectiveness and outcomes.
10. The language used in implementation of activities such as training and dissemination of information, including the mid-term evaluation report, should be taken into consideration to guarantee full participation particularly at the local level.
11. Coaches should be chosen from the selected regions so that they are accessible to the beneficiaries.
12. Coaching should include expert/specialized individuals practicing in the different sectors and not civil servants who have more theoretical based information.
13. After completion of a programme intervention, implementers should assess the results of the intervention to ensure that it produced the desired output.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings and the lessons learned, the evaluation concludes in several recommendations, which could smooth the JP's progress towards achieving its desired results.

The evaluation recommendations include:

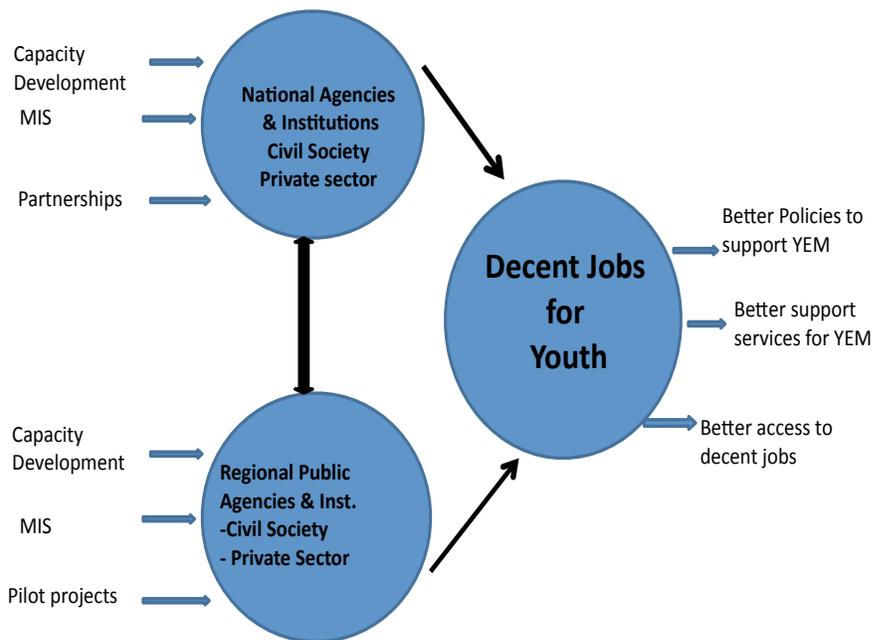
1. A first priority is for the UN team to decide on who will be the lead agent for the JP. Two foreseen options include: (1) The UN team can choose a leader from among themselves; or, (2) The JP can contract an international CTA. The benefits of the latter option are that it would not overburden any one UN agency with the multitude of responsibilities of leadership and have a more independent approach.
2. The JP's timeline should be extended to make up for all the time lost especially during 2011. All stakeholders have expressed interest in having an extension at no cost, and the evaluation strongly believes that for the JP to make some impact this extension should be granted.
3. The JP stakeholders need to formulate a workplan jointly for its second phase indicating the activities of each agency, under which outcome and the expected outputs. This should be accompanied by a budget plan in effort to find ways of cost-sharing and/or reduction of expenses as its financial resources will need to be stretched if an extension is granted.

On the project design level:

4. Project design needs to be revised. A first step is to deconstruct the JP's overall objective to specific objectives that are measurable and/ or attainable within the remaining timeline. Subsequently, these objectives should be matched with a set of activities that show a correlation between them to produce the desired outputs and outcomes. The UN team may need to get technical support for this activity.
5. The project needs to develop appropriate monitoring indicators to measure the progress towards achieving its outcomes; this activity could also be carried out by the same technical support that will assist in overseeing the revision of the project design.
6. The JP needs to include activities that respond to poor unemployed women and women migration. Emphasis should be in providing women with employment activities appropriate to their cultural setting and social challenges.
7. The JP needs to be decentralized and streamlined enabling its stakeholders at the central and regional level to work in sync towards achieving the JP outcomes. To attain this capacity enhancement needs to be included as a crosscutting activity implemented at both the central and regional/local levels to produce the same results (Figure 3).
8. The JP needs to develop criteria that define the target group as stated in the JPD, i.e., the neediest and whose opportunities for employment is the lowest.
9. An advocacy and communication strategy needs to be incorporated in the revised project design. Entrepreneurship activities need alignment with government policies to encourage job creation. For instance, government providing low interest loans for the establishment of cooperatives or associations can carry this out. The JP could assist in developing these cooperatives by building on the activities of the last couple of years. Beneficiaries, for example in El-Kef,

who have received training to create SMEs in harvesting snails or aromatic herbs for export could work collectively rather than individually. In doing so, they can increase their supply to meet market export demands, reduce the risk of individually defaulting on loans and increase the chance of survival of their businesses. Pilot projects of cooperatives should include capacity development in management, finance and marketing; this includes training of TOTs to provide these services to beneficiaries.

Figure 3



The above recommendations should have an underlying objective to change the JP’s course of action from functioning as several small projects each managed by its UN agency to working as one project. Each agency has a competitive edge, all of which are complementary; yet, the JP effectiveness requires the five agencies to work as one to produce the necessary synergy to achieve its outcomes.

A revised project design therefore should be based on this objective; consequently, each agency should be assigned an activity/component based on its expertise that contributes directly to the one project and not have its own agenda and activities, as the present status quo. For example, important components of a revised JP design should include:

- (i) Institutional capacity development of policy makers at the national and local levels; this includes enabling them to formulate policy for YEM and transfer these policies

to programmes. Both UNDP and ILO can take on this component. UNDP could focus on capacity development of national and local policy makers at the relevant institutions such as, aforementioned, institutional development of the Observatoire (MIS), data analysis, evaluation and monitoring; in addition, to overseeing that these policies contribute to poverty reduction and empowerment of women, ensuring that the JP is aligned with the MDGs. The ILO, on the other hand, with its expertise in labour/employment and building partnerships should oversee the JP activities in establishing PPP with representatives of government, private sector, banks and civil society, and through these partnerships identify employment opportunities and capacity development of the target group—the unemployed youth. These opportunities should then be tested as pilot projects by the appropriate agency at the project level. Concerning migration and returnees, IOM has a dual role to play at the policy and project level.

- (ii) Subsequently, at the project level, industrial or agricultural related employment generation activities, FAO or UNIDO, respectively would oversee the implementation of these pilot projects. FAO could focus on pilot projects such as those that involve entrepreneurship activities, which includes creation of cooperatives comprising modernized agriculture production in El-Kef, or UNIDO in renewable energy in Gafsa. UNIDO would also complement these activities by building the trade capacity of these cooperatives including technology diffusion. Similarly, IOM would focus on the returnee migrants and their integration into these projects implemented by FAO and UNIDO. Another option, as these returnees may have different skills from the locals, they could be assisted in establishing their own associations (UNIDO), or be recruited as trainees where there skills are required. The aim is to benefit from the skills of the returnees gained abroad, conversely, create job opportunities for them.
- (iii) Finally, activities at the policy and project levels should be linked. In other words, the policies being formulated at the central and local levels (with the assistance of UNDP and ILO) are represented by the projects implemented at the local level (FAO, IOM and UNIDO). Consequently, these policies are tested at the local levels subsequently their impact/results feedback to the policy level for finer tuning.

On the process level:

10. Project activities should be continuous as to maintain their effectiveness to reach the desired output, in other words, there should not be big gaps of time between activities aiming at the same outcome.
11. Training sessions should be conducted in Arabic also all project documents that are to be shared with the national counterparts should be translated to Arabic, including the mid-term evaluation report.
12. The role of the PC needs to be clarified and supported. To resolve the PC's myriad roles, it is essential that the programme provide him necessary support such as attending workshops on management, monitoring, etc. In addition, hiring an assistant as included in his TOR. Another option is to assign two

focal points in each of the selected regions (El-Kef and Gafsa) to assist him in overseeing the JP activities. The latter may be more effective especially since it is perceived that the JP will proceed with a more decentralized approach in its implementation. Moreover, as customary, the PC should have a vehicle for the programme.

13. The JP needs to pursue partnerships with the private sector to encourage their involvement, as they can make important contributions such as assisting in identifying effective training programmes for the youth that would correspond to the local job market demands and/ or offering internship programmes. Additionally, the JP should consider conducting a pilot project similar to that carried out by the IOM. For example, in IOM's component to find employment for circular migrants in France, they made contacts with Tunisian top executives, senior managers and businessmen in order to sensitize them and ensure their involvement in the process; this same activity can be replicated in Tunisia.<sup>25</sup>
14. There is a need for new economic policies that redistribute economic development ventures and investments to the interior regions. This can include providing incentives to lure large companies to open/relocate to the interior regions and to hire from the local youth population. Pilot projects should also be aligned with these new policies.

On the results level:

15. The JP needs to improve its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) methods; there are two options on how this can be carried out: (1) hiring an expert to oversee the M&E activities of the JP; or (2) providing the PC with training in M&E. Moreover, the UN team should have a standard M&E methodology; consequently, it would be very useful to have a monitoring and evaluation workshop for the JP team.
16. The JP needs to place stronger emphasis on capacity development of policy makers, managers and staff of participating institutions. This is an important component of the project and should be included in the second phase of the programme.

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<sup>25</sup> IOM. Engaging Tunisian Youth to Achieve the MDGs. Establishing a mechanism of circular Migration between Tunisia, Italy and France. pg. 8

## ANNEX 1

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## ANNEX 2

### Evaluation Criteria and Questions

The evaluation questions define the information that must be generated as a result of the evaluation process. The questions are grouped according to the criteria to be used in assessing and answering them. These criteria are, in turn, grouped according to the three levels of the programme.

#### **Design level:**

- **Relevance: The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with the needs and interest of the people, the needs of the country, the Millennium Development Goals and the policies of associates and donors.**
  
- a) Is the identification of the problems, with their respective causes, clear in the joint programme?
  
- b) Does the Joint Programme take into account the particularities and specific interests of women and men in the areas of intervention?
  
- c) To what extent has the intervention strategy been adapted to the areas of intervention in which it is being implemented? What actions does the programme envisage, to respond to obstacles that may arise from the political and socio-cultural background?
  
- d) Are the follow-up indicators relevant and do they meet the quality needed to measure the outputs and outcomes of the joint programme?

e) To what extent has the MDG-F Secretariat contributed to raising the quality of the design of the joint programmes?

- **Ownership in the design: Effective exercise of leadership by the country's social agents in development interventions**

a) To what extent do the intervention objectives and strategies of the Joint Programme respond to national and regional plans and programmes, to identified needs, and to the operational context of national politics?

b) To what extent have the country's national and local authorities and social agents been taken into consideration, participated, or have become involved, at the design stage of the development intervention?

**Process level**

- **Efficiency: Extent to which resources/inputs (funds, time, etc.) have been turned into results**

a) To what extent does the joint programme's management model (i.e. instruments; economic, human and technical resources; organizational structure; information flows; decision-making in management) contribute to obtaining the predicted products and results?

b) To what extent are the participating agencies coordinating with each other, with the government and with civil society? Is there a methodology underpinning the work and internal communications that contributes to the joint implementation?

c) Are there efficient coordination mechanisms to avoid overloading the counterparts, participating population/actors?

d) Is the pace of implementing the products of the programme ensuring the completeness of the results of the joint programme? How do the different components of the joint programme interrelate?

e) Are work methodologies, financial instruments, etc. shared among agencies, institutions and Joint Programmes?

f) Have more efficient (sensitive) and appropriate measures been adopted to respond to the political and socio-cultural problems identified?

**- Ownership in the process: Effective exercise of leadership by the country's social agents in development interventions**

- g) To what extent have the target population and participants made the programme their own, taking an active role in it? What modes of participation have taken place?
- h) To what extent have public/private national resources and/or counterparts been mobilized to contribute to the programme's objective and produce results and impacts?

**Results level**

**- Effectiveness: Extent to which the objectives of the development intervention have been achieved or are expected to be achieved, bearing in mind their relative importance.**

- a) Is the programme making progress towards achieving the stipulated results?
  - a. To what extent and in what ways is the joint programme contributing to the Millennium Development Goals at the local and national levels?
  - b. To what extent is the programme contributing to the goals set by the thematic window, and in what ways?
- b) Is the stipulated timeline of outputs being met? What factors are contributing to progress or delay in the achievement of the outputs and outcomes?
- c) Do the outputs produced meet the required high quality?
- d) Does the programme have follow-up mechanisms (to verify the quality of the products, punctuality of delivery, etc.) to measure progress in the achievement of the envisaged results?
- e) Does the programme have follow-up mechanisms (to verify the quality of the products, punctuality of delivery, etc.) to measure progress in the achievement of the envisaged results?
- f) Is the programme providing coverage to beneficiaries as planned?
- g) In what way has the programme come up with innovative measures for problem-solving?
- h) Have any good practices, success stories, or transferable examples been identified?
- i) In what ways has the joint programme contributed to the issue of fair youth employment?
- j) In what ways has the joint programme contributed to the issue of internal and/or external migration?
- k) What types of differentiated effects are resulting from the joint programme in accordance with the sex, race, ethnic group, rural or urban setting of the beneficiary population, and to what extent?

**Sustainability: Probability of the benefits of the intervention continuing in the long term.**

- a) Are the necessary premises occurring to ensure the sustainability of the effects of the joint programme?

At local and national level:

- i. Is the programme supported by national and/or local institutions?
  - ii. Are these institutions showing technical capacity and leadership commitment to keep working with the programme and to repeat it?
  - iii. Have operating capacities been created and/or reinforced in national partners?
  - iv. Do the partners have sufficient financial capacity to keep up the benefits produced by the programme?
  - v. Is the duration of the programme sufficient to ensure a cycle that will project the sustainability of the interventions?
- b) To what extent are the visions and actions of the partners consistent or divergent with regard to the joint programme?
- c) In what ways can the governance of the joint programme be improved so that it has greater likelihood of achieving future sustainability?