

# U.S. ASSISTANCE TO TUNISIA



*For a Better Future*

Volume I, Issue 4

December 2014 Newsletter

## Inside this issue:

*Entrepreneurship Summit in Morocco* 2

*Search for Common Ground Encourages Tunisian Young Leaders Participation in society* 2

*The Tunisian Chamber of Commerce, an Embassy Partner, Announcing their E-Business Platform at the Salon E-Commerce* 3

*U.S Embassy Staff Attended a Training of Trainers on Innovative Leadership held by Women's Enterprise for Sustainability* 3

*Evaluation Site Visits to U.S. Funded Projects in the Governorate of Zaghouan* 4

*A Tunisian Young Entrepreneur Received the Spirit of Tech-I Award in the Global Innovation through Science and Technology* 4

*Announcements* 5

## U.S. Agency for International Development Re-Opens Office in Tunisia

On November 20, 2014 the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) opened its new office in Tunisia. Ambassador Jake Walles hosted the event at U.S. Embassy Tunis, and was joined by Alina Romanowski, Acting Assistant Administrator for the Middle East Bureau (USAID), Faycal Gouiaa, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Hedi Larbi, Minister for Equipment, Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development.

USAID began working in Tunisia shortly following the historic revolution in January 2011. Currently, USAID programs focus on addressing Tunisia's high unemployment rate by creating new economic and employment opportunities and support for the Government of Tunisia's economic reform agenda. USAID programs have also supported Tunisia's recent round of free and fair elections through international elections observers and domestic monitors.



USAID Reopening Ceremony

## Regional Seminar on Assessing Progress of Criminal Justice Sector Reform in North Africa

Through support from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and the Government of Tunisia co-hosted, on November 10-13 in Tunis, a regional seminar to assess the progress of the criminal justice sector reform in North Africa. The seminar brought together representatives from domestic law enforcement, government ministries, civil society, and members of parliament to exchange views on issues related to reform in the criminal justice sector.

Tony Fernandes, INL's Director for Africa and Middle East, delivered opening remarks, along with Ridha Ben Rabbah, Director General for International Cooperation in the Tunisian Ministry of Interior, and Ambassador William Taylor, USIP's Vice President for Middle East and Africa.

Participants from Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Tunisia, and Yemen participated in the conference, and highlighted progress in each other their nations on security sector reform, and discussed regional approaches to address remaining gaps.

## Entrepreneurship Summit in Morocco

*The MEPI-funded Women's Enterprise for Sustainability (WES) program empowers women-led organizations in Tunisia to launch and operate new women's centers as social enterprises. Through WES centers, aspiring and established women entrepreneurs alike gain new skills and networks, launch and expand businesses, and develop as innovative leaders in their communities.*

*Chema Gargouri, the WES Country Director, was invited by the U.S. government to participate in the Global Entrepreneurship Summit held in Marrakech, Morocco, on November 19-21. Three thousand participants from 50 countries attended*

*more than 30 workshops to discuss and learn about all aspects of entrepreneurship. Topics included a wide range from regional connectivity, social entrepreneurship, smart cities, creating cultures and conditions for entrepreneurship, and innovative solutions to integrate the informal sector into the formal economy to crowdsourcing and social investing, among others.*

*Mrs. Gargouri stated that "During the Summit, I had the opportunity to speak about the Institute of International Education's Women's Enterprise for Sustainability (WES) program and its unique approach to women's entrepreneurship. Despite the many challenges that all women face in making their entrepreneurial journey, successful programs such as WES support women in*

*overcoming the various barriers. Any trip holds good and bad surprises. The WES Centers in the 11 governorates of Tunisia exist to equip women entrepreneurs and make them ready for their own "business trips."*



Group Photo during the GES in Morocco

## Search for Common Ground Encourages Tunisian Young Leaders Participation in society

Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) partner Search for Common Ground-Tunisia's (SFCG) recently expanded its Youth Leadership Councils program to all 24 governorates. This program provides skills training and hands-on leadership experience for Tunisian youth in the form of youth-led local councils through which youth have opportunities to engage government officials on policy matters. They focus particularly at the level of local governance, important for Tunisia's continued democratic transition.

SFCG's youth councils, many which have taken the initiative to become registered civil society organizations, have successfully facilitated a series of "citizen cafés" in several governorates across the country in the lead up to the 2014 elections, which brought together candidates from different political ideologies in open conversations with their constituents while also promoting constructive dialogue on topics of interest to Tunisian youth. Numerous candidates who attended these "citizen cafés" have since been elected to the new parliament, providing bridges through which young civil society activists can continue to advocate for youth issues.

Many of SFCG's youth councils signed agreements



SFCG's Country Director During the Signature of Small Grants Awarded to the Bizerte Youth Council

with municipalities which united youth and government officials to conduct "mock government" trainings, simulation exercises which allowed youth to learn more about government functions. Youth groups and government also jointly carried out voter education programs. Both types of initiatives allowed youth activists in these governments to more effectively participate in local affairs. They represent a great opportunity for strengthened youth participation in Tunisia's on-going government decentralization process.

## The Tunisian Chamber of Commerce, an Embassy Partner, Announcing their E-Business Platform at the Salon E-Commerce

The Tunisian Chamber of Commerce (CCIT) attended December 4, 2014 the fourth edition of the Salon E-Commerce, hosted at the Tunisian Union of Industry, Commerce and Handicraft (UTICA) headquarters.

The Salon was an opportunity for CCIT to make a public presentation entitled “Tunisia e-Business Network:

genuine stimulant for exports” to introduce its project “Creating E-Business Platform,” funded by the U.S. Government. Maher Ben Sedrine, the project manager, stated during the presentation that virtual market place (VMP) has become a critical tool for developing international trade opportunities. According to CCIT, the creation of e-business platform is an urgent priority, noting it will stimulate the



Presentation of the CCIT at the Salon E-Commerce

Tunisian economy and promote exports. Maher cited examples of successful virtual platforms operating in several European sectors to highlight how Tunisian exporters can benefit from this tool.

Maher also discussed some challenges that Tunisian companies might face as they move into this new system, to include limited access to the

VMP services, high enrolment costs, and low visibility of exporters’ products on this market place. To overcome such obstacles and urgently address needs of Tunisian exporters, CCIT intends to leverage its relationship with international chambers of commerce and their members to ensure this initiative’s success while also provide diversified networks for Tunisian entrepreneurs.

## U.S Embassy Staff Attended a Training of Trainers on Innovative Leadership held by Women’s Enterprise for Sustainability

On December 8, 2014, U.S. embassy staff attended a Training of Trainers on “Innovative Leadership,” a three-day event held by MEPI partner, Women’s Enterprise for Sustainability (WES). During the training, which included 13 partner associations covering 11 Tunisian governorates, trainers had the opportunity to learn leadership skills, successful interpersonal communication, active listening, best

communication practices, limiting and leading beliefs, and strategic and operational management. All participants were enthusiastic about practicing the new tools learned during the session, and expressed enthusiasm for employing their skills within each of their local organizations in order to assist and help women entrepreneurs reach success at all levels.



Group Photo with all WES Partner Associations and U.S Embassy Staff

## Evaluation Site Visits to U.S. Funded Projects in the Governorate of Zaghouan

On November 19, 2014, U.S. Embassy staff conducted evaluation site visits to a number of U.S. funded projects in Zaghouan. Embassy staff met with two MEPI local partners, the Tunisian Institute for Democracy and Development (TIDD) and the Tunisian Mediterranean Center (TUMED), both of which are

working on voter outreach and voter education. TIDD manages elections-related activities throughout Tunisia, with a focus on the interior region. TUMED provided in-depth civic education and voter education training to 6200 rural women in five governorates.



Group Photo with TIDD and U.S Embassy Staff

## A Tunisian Young Entrepreneur Received the Spirit of Tech-I Award in the Global Innovation Through Science and Technology

During the Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) held in Marrakech, on November 19-21, 2014, Wassim Zoghلامي, a young Tunisian entrepreneur, was chosen by his fellow finalists to receive the Spirit of Tech-I Award. The award was presented as part of the Global Innovation through Science and Technology (GIST) Tech-I Competition. Wassim created a mobile application (app) called "What'sIn." This app enables consumers with allergies to instantly learn about products ingredients when scanning a Universal Product Code, which will help avoid allergic reactions. Congratulations to Wassim!



Group Photo During the GES 2014

## Announcements

### Study of the United States Institutes Scholars & Foreign Secondary Educators

The U.S. Embassy is pleased to announce the 2015 Study of the United States Institutes for Scholars & Foreign Secondary Educators. These institutes are intensive six-week academic seminars at American universities throughout the United States.

**Application Deadline: January 5, 2015**

For more information about the program and how to apply, please visit our website at:  
<http://tunisia.usembassy.gov>

### TechGirls program Summer 2015

TechGirls program is sponsored by the U.S Government and it offers secondary school girls from the Middle East and North Africa the opportunity to engage in an intensive, month-long exchange program in summer 2015 in the United States focused on promoting the high-level study of technology.

**Application Deadline: January 07, 2015**

Inquiries and applications should be sent to: [TunisExchanges@state.gov](mailto:TunisExchanges@state.gov)

### Professional Exchange Program for Disability Rights Advocates in the USA

Hands Along the Nile Development Services (HANDS) is accepting applications for a U.S. exchange and fellowship opportunity for young professionals in NGOs working to improve lives of people with disabilities. The program will take place in Chicago, IL and Seattle, WA in the United States of America from May 4 – June 4, 2015.

**Application Deadline: January 10, 2015**

For details and the application form, please visit HANDS' website:  
[http://www.handsalongthenile.org/program/PFP\\_NGO.html](http://www.handsalongthenile.org/program/PFP_NGO.html)

### MEPI Student Leaders 2015

The project provides an intensive 6-week exchange program to the United States for approximately 100 undergraduate students from the Middle East and North Africa. Participants have the opportunity to meet their American peers, engage in local community service activities, and observe and take part in the governmental process on the local, state, and federal levels.

**Application Deadline: January 31, 2015**

For more information about the program and how to apply, please visit our website at:  
<http://tunisia.usembassy.gov>

## Foreign Assistance Unit

### U.S. Embassy Tunis

Les Berges du Lac 2045 - Tunisia

Phone: 71 107 000

Fax: 71 107 090

E-mail: ForeignAssistanceTunis@state.gov

We'll be on the Web soon!

<http://tunisia.usembassy.gov>

*Since the January 2011 revolution, the United States has provided approximately \$550 million to support Tunisia's transition, focusing on technical and financial assistance to Tunisia's economic growth, support for peace and stability, and support for civil society and democratic practices. The U.S. government plans to allocate more than \$60 million in Fiscal Year 2014 funding, building on assistance programs initiated after the revolution.*

