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Analytics,
Technical
assistance,
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sharing

JUNE 2018

MENA MDTF: A new Cycle

Dear Partners,

This donor newsletter is the first of a series of quarterly updates that we will use to keep you, our partners, up to date on the MENA MDTF. We are delighted to have this opportunity to communicate with you more regularly on our latest accomplishments, challenges, and plans.

Since our Program Council Meeting in August 2017, we have successfully shifted the MENA MDTF into a new cycle of activities that fully underpins the World Bank's aim to foster peace and stability in the region. With its renewed focus, an extension to 2021, and a successful replenishment, the MENA MDTF is living up to its expectations as a quick and efficient way to channel donor resources where they are most needed on the ground.

In this newsletter you will find three examples of what the MDTF can do. The ambitious Bringing Back Business in Yemen activity fosters creative approaches even in conflict situations, and informs the on-going strategies and design of operations for reconstruction in Yemen. EmpowerHer is an innovative instrument that targets marginalized, unemployed youth graduates and marginalized women in Morocco and Tunisia, who face constraints in finding jobs or marketing products produced at home, to develop technological solutions that help overcome challenges for women's economic empowerment. The multi-sided, online MENA Youth platform was created in 2017 to cross the physical barriers that isolate youth and enables connections across communities, regions and borders and creates ripple effects in learning and development.

More recently, and in response to the feedback you have shared with us, the MDTF has largely expanded its reach into recovery and reconstruction by continuing to support the Bank's unique analytical work on the Syrian conflict and providing critical and timely technical assistance to the Iraq reconstruction effort. Building on the Bank's capacity to mobilize regional activities, it also contributed to the outreach efforts of the regional water security and education programs. The next step will be to help design a regional digital platform to help accelerate job creation, a central part of our efforts to usher in a new economy in MENA, building on the MDTF's large portfolio of renewing the social contract in North Africa.

None of that would be possible if we hadn't improved the agility of the program. By working more closely with our country teams and partners on the ground to identify and evaluate proposals, and refining and mainstreaming our monitoring and evaluation processes, we have drastically improved our responsiveness while maintaining the same level of fiduciary oversight that you have entrusted in us.

We look forward to keeping you updated and engaged in the MENA MDTF. This new cycle offers an incredible opportunity to fully leverage the Bank's experience, capacity, and responsiveness, at the service of our shared goal of peace and stability.

Sincerely,
The MENA MDTF Team

STORIES FROM THE FIELD



Bringing back business in Yemen

Grant amount: \$300,000

Timeline: October 2017 – December 2018

Despite the experience and insights the Yemeni private sector can provide, it has stayed mostly out of the discussion of reconstruction and recovery efforts. In this groundbreaking work, the MENA MDTF is closing the gap between the country's Damage and Needs Assessment and specific product projections that the private sector needs to take action.

Yemen Bringing Back Business is mobilizing the Yemeni private sector to increase its contribution to the reconstruction and recovery efforts. It does this on two fronts: generating previously unavailable information about the strength of the sector and forming an inclusive structure to represent the interests of the private sector as a whole.

On the first front, numerous surveys, and assessments have been conducted to provide public and private sector actors with insights on current and future prospects. Specifically: a Rapid Enterprise Survey will capture firms' coping mechanisms and obstacles to doing business in the current conflict and explore what type of interventions might be most effective to revitalize firms and support their resilience. A comprehensive assessment of the Yemeni construction sector, which is critical for economic recovery and accelerating the reconstruction phase, includes mapping of the sector, identification of constraints and examination of access to procurement opportunities.

Finally, a quantitative assessment of the expected surge in demand for basic building materials needed during the reconstruction phase is currently being finalized. The aim would be to close the information gap on the scale of the private sector opportunity that is represented by the reconstruction in terms of provision of construction materials, and possibly construction services.

“As a Yemeni, I am glad that the private sector is being given this jump start thanks to the MDTF”

On the second front, the establishment of a structure that is fully inclusive of all private sector interests is expected to be officially announced in July. The structure will enable effective collaboration and consultation between the sector and the various humanitarian and development partners. It is envisioned to comprise representatives from the private sector, the diaspora, and other business support institutions.

No data and no analysis exists on Yemen's private sector like what Bringing Back Business will produce. The scale and substance of this look at Yemen's economy is the first of its kind. According to Trade and Competitiveness Analyst Sami Sofan, "The Bank has been pushing its limits in conflict zones. While the work has challenges, our goals are achievable. "As a Yemeni, I am glad that the private sector is being given this jump start thanks to the MDTF".



Empower Her! in Tunisia

Grant amount: \$300,000

Timeline: October 2017 – December 2018

Country Program Coordinator, Afef Haddad was told “I didn’t think I could do anything but now I know that I can.” by a youth participant, in a hackathon supported through the Empower Her program. The MDTF is supporting Phase 2 of this women’s economic empowerment initiative. It brings together women and youth to overcome obstacles to participation in the workforce. EmpowerHer uses a unique approach that simultaneously empowers two groups to rebuild the social contract.

It all started with focus groups of women from the most remote areas of Tunisia sharing their needs and challenges. Some couldn’t access markets to sell their products due to poor access to transportation. Others didn’t have the information required to market or price their products well. In many of these areas there was no internet access. To further complicate matters, some of the women, while able to create beautiful handicrafts and intricate rugs, could not read.

Bring in the youth! The Empower Her hackathon organizers explained these issues to the youth who designed innovative solutions that ranged from easy-to-use picture-based e-commerce platforms for the illiterate to an app that helps women artisans share raw materials thus improving their margins. One of the apps even used photos to help women identify plants to use for organic beauty product recipes and essential oils. Five winning teams were identified in Tunisia and three in Morocco. Ms. Haddad recalls, “I struggled to find the words to console the teams who didn’t win, only to find out that they were so happy to have had the opportunity to prove to themselves and the world that they had real skills and creativity. I was so moved at their reaction.”

One of the most remarkable parts of the project is cross-generational learning. Poor youth are helping poor women in an utterly unique way.

“Great results are rolling in as these previously unemployed youth start their own successful businesses”

The MDTF is making these prototype tools a reality. The MDTF is helping these startups become investor-ready with coaching, incubators, investors, and potentially connecting them to Amazon and Alibaba. Great results are rolling in as these previously unemployed youth start their own successful businesses. These startups are more than just business though, they are part of the solution to a main driver of conflict—the breakdown of social inclusion. The Tunisian startups were launched in Hammamet, Tunisia, on June 22, 2018 with an investor conference to follow in the fall of 2018. Stay engaged for exciting results.



MENA Youth On the Rise

Grant amount: \$280,000

Timeline: January 2017 – September 2018

The MDTF is supporting the second phase of the MENA Youth Platform, scaling up the successes of the first year to help budding social entrepreneurs in the region and inform our programming. “The first year of the platform exceeded all targets, now we need to reinforce and support those gains” says Olivier Lavinal, who leads this activity. “Over the next 12 months, the platform will be scaled up drastically, from hundreds of active participants to thousands across the region.”

To date, the Platform has successfully supported 1100+ new relationships between young social entrepreneurs and with open-source, for-profit projects at the early seed stage of development. In its second phase, it will develop “OpenVillage.”, a network of physical spaces providing courses, business development and example of viable prototypes of nascent business to expand its outreach.

“1100+ new relationships between young social entrepreneurs”

The platform mobilizes financial as well as technical assistance for these entrepreneurs. Its “swarmfund” will allow thousands of innovators and organizations to pool small monetary investments to fund promising new businesses.

The organic and dynamic exchanges underway on the platform are driving a social innovation ecosystem. The number of interactions and proposed ideas grows by the week. An upcoming regional festival will permit the young entrepreneurs to present their work to potential investors, showcase to the media and contribute to positive narratives about the region.

But the MENA Youth platform doesn’t only benefit the entrepreneurs who populate its message boards, it has already started to influence the contours of our Bank operations. In Egypt, the youth lens is helping to shape the design of the Women and Youth Entrepreneurship (P162835) project. In Jordan, youth monitors help to ensure strong linkages between the labor intensive works for refugees and host populations as part of the Municipal Services and Social Resilience Project (P161982). In the West Bank and Gaza, Bank teams are directly engaging young people in discussions on project priorities, targeting, and activities. “Young people are contributing to Bank operations with new technology, new ways of thinking, and more integrated solutions” says Tobias Lechtenfeld. “Leveraging youth has the potential to transform how we help our clients.”

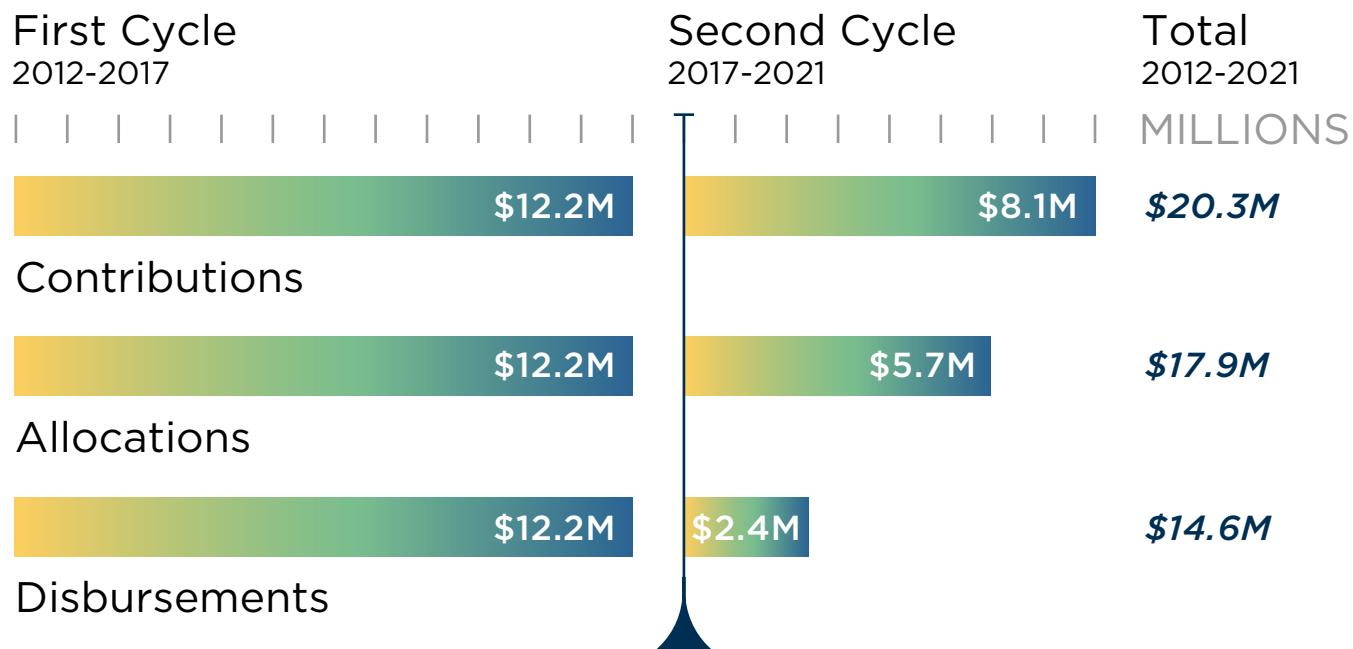
Country Director Asad Alam: “Building on our engagement with entrepreneurs and social innovators, and linking them to the new Egypt Women and Youth Entrepreneurship operation will allow the task team to build more inclusive solutions for supporting innovation and entrepreneurship in Egypt.”

MDTF’s support permits the development of analytical tools that will help guide Task Teams, Country Teams, and senior management to develop engaging strategy frameworks and design youth-responsive operations. Specifically, Youth-at-a-glance Country Notes provide specific guidance for specific contexts and the flagship report, Cost of Youth Exclusion in MENA, will equip Bank management with cutting-edge evidence on youth, innovation, entrepreneurship and startup programs.

“The MENA Youth Platform has been so successful, we hope to expand to other regions, especially sub-Saharan Africa” says Olivier Lavinal. “At this point, it is essentially a matter of impact.”

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

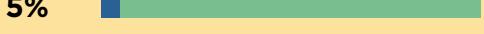
First Cycle



Second Cycle Active Portfolio

May 31, 2018

COUNTRY PROJECT	DISBURSED/ALLOCATED (\$)
Jordan Supporting the Implementation of Key Economic Reforms in Tunisia: Thinking and Working Adaptively	\$242,878 / \$250,000 97% 
Tunisia Transforming the Road Sector in Tunisia*	\$583,669 / \$909,000 64% 
Yemen Catalyzing the Private Sector Role in Recovery and Reconstruction in Yemen (BBB)	\$74,474 / \$250,000 30% 
MENA MENA Regional Youth Platform	\$235,249 / \$280,000 84% 
Tunisia Support to Deepening Decentralization and Improving Inclusion in Tunisia	\$66,303 / \$300,000 22% 
Djibouti TA for Design of an Incremental Home Improvement Program in Djibouti	\$121,324 / \$150,000 81% 

Tunisia Understanding Child and Adolescent Skills Development in Tunisia	\$44,464 / \$250,000 18% 
Tunisia, Morocco Women Economic Empowerment - Empower Her Maghreb	\$80,263 / \$325,000 25% 
Lebanon Developing Innovative Practices for Improving Social Cohesion between Lebanese and Syrian Refugees Living in Host Communities	\$177,067 / \$250,000 71% 
Iraq/KRG Women and Jobs for an Inclusive Labor Market in KRG: A Pilot Program	\$176,189 / \$300,000 59% 
Regional Addressing Health Needs of Syrian Refugees	\$248,451 / \$280,000 89% 
Regional Water Scarce Cities Initiative	\$65,034 / \$120,000 54% 
Regional World Development Report 2018 Regional Events	\$99,829 / \$100,000 100% 
Jordan Household Expenditure and Income Survey (HEIS) TA 2017/2018	\$73,883 / \$100,000 74% 
Tunisia Supporting the Implementation of Key Economic Reforms in Tunisia: Thinking and Working Adaptively	\$9,407 / \$300,000 3% 
Syria Economic Analysis of Refugee Returns in Syria (Analytical Roadmap)	\$60,158 / \$300,000 20% 
Libya Libya Preparation of Emergency Electricity Supply Improvement	\$0 / \$250,000 0% 
Iraq Iraq Natural Gas Market Framework TA	\$16,662 / \$350,000 5% 
Iraq Iraq Emergency Housing Reconstruction and DNA**	\$0 / \$400,000 0% 
Iraq Iraq Education Development Support Operation	\$10,646 / \$200,000 5% 

*Recipient-Executed | **Pending Activation