



GENERAL FINDINGS REPORT

YOUTH COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN FOCUS GROUP WORKSHOPS

JULY - AUGUST 2017

FACILITATING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP
AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT IN TUNISIA



UNITED NATIONS
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

This document has been prepared by the Department of Agri-Business Development of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

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INTRODUCTION

During July and August 2017, focus group workshops were held in each of the Mashrou3i project's 14 target regions. These were delivered by Blue Fish consultancy on behalf of UNIDO. The aim was to collect insights from young people (under 35 years old) to gain a better understanding of the needs of youth and their perception of economic opportunities in their region.

The feedback and research inputs were presented in a report for each region. Key findings of these 14 individual reports and quantitative surveys are summarized in this document. The collective reports will be used for the development of a youth communication campaign which will contribute to the promotion of economic opportunities, entrepreneurship and job creation in Mashrou3i's target regions.

METHODOLOGY

The focus groups used a qualitative method complemented by a quantitative study, which was co-designed by UNIDO and Blue Fish. UNIDO also supported in the organization of the workshops, contacting regional partners and local support institutions to arrange logistics and the use of locations free of charge.

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Drawing on UNIDO's network, young people in the regions were informed about the workshops and encouraged to fill in an online application form, expressing their interest in taking part. 681 applications in total were received, and around 15 participants per region were selected by Blue Fish, based on ensuring a balanced representation of the following target groups:

- Beneficiaries of Mashrou3i and HP LIFE; future entrepreneurs, active entrepreneurs, start-ups (maximum 35 years);
- Entrepreneurs or entrepreneurs who have not necessarily benefited from the support of Mashrou3i;
- Young university graduates (between the ages of 20 and 25) who have not attended HP LIFE are looking for a job or are thinking about starting a business;
- Young unemployed (in their twenties), who have not completed higher education, do not necessarily have a business idea and did not know about Mashrou3i before the workshop (at least one person with this profile in the group).

In total, 215 people attended the workshops, including 127 women (59%) and 88 men (41%). Each focus group participant received a fee of 100 TND for their attendance, to cover travel costs and encourage them to actively contribute for the entire session. Catering was also provided. One or two HP LIFE trainers and UNIDO regional experts also participated in the workshops to engage in the discussion with youth and to share their ideas and experiences.

Figure 1: Overview of Focus Group Workshops

REGION	DATE	No. Participants	Facilitator
Beja	11.07.2017	15	Lobna Saidi
Gafsa	3.08.2017	13	Leila Ben-Gacem
Gabes	20.07.2017	15	Leila Ben-Gacem
Jendouba	3.08.2017	15	Lobna Saidi
Kairouan	13.07.2017	15	Leila Ben-Gacem
Kasserine	1.08.2017	14	Leila Ben-Gacem
Kebili	31.07.2017	14	Mehdi Baccouche
Kef	12.07.2017	16	Lobna Saidi
Medenine	20.07.2017	13	Mehdi Baccouche
Sidi Bouzid	1.08.2017	18	Leila Ben-Gacem
Siliana	17.07.2017	16	Lobna Saidi
Tatouine	19.07.2017	14	Mehdi Baccouche
Tozeur	1.08.2017	15	Mehdi Baccouche
Zaghouan	19.07.2017	13	Lobna Saidi

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The workshops were interactive and led by an experienced facilitator who encouraged open dialogue and contributions from all participants. The general goal was to gain insights and a better understanding of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, as well as entrepreneurship challenges and opportunities facing young people in the regions. This included identifying sectors young people view as high potential and possible barriers to their exploitation. Rather than focusing on negative aspects, the focus groups concentrated on solutions and the afternoon of the workshops was devoted to coming up with ideas and further developing these solutions within the group.

The findings of the focus group discussion were then documented by the facilitator in a report. The 14 regional reports present insights around the following key research areas:

- Entrepreneurial support ecosystem in the region
- Economic sectors with high potential
- Entrepreneurs perception of what works well and what does not
- Entrepreneurs perception of business sustainability or growth needs
- 'Entrepreneurship is a solution for unemployment'; what needs to be done to make this a reality in the region
- Initiatives, spaces, people and solutions missing that could improve the entrepreneurial scene in the region



Photo: Youth participants from Focus Group research in Kairouan

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

At the start of each workshop, participants were asked to fill out the survey. This included questions about their educational background and their perception of the entrepreneurial ecosystem (opportunities, hopes for the future, high-potential sectors, how they find employment, possible solutions, motivational factors for starting a business) as well as which communication channels they use to find information and general feelings towards their region.

Answers were based on an attitude scale, e.g. agree, somehow agree, somehow disagree or disagree, where participants selected one answer based on how strongly they felt the statement was true or false.

GENERAL FINDINGS

In general, the young people who participated in the focus groups felt positive about the potential of their region with 55% responding in the survey that the future of their region is “great” and 32% feeling the future is “good”.

With regard to the entrepreneurial spirit, 52% of all participants in all 14 workshops said they would prefer to have a stable job; while 26% agree and 35% somehow agree that there is a lack of entrepreneurial culture in their region, and almost the same percentages (27% agree and 32% somehow agree) said that there is a need for educational reform to improve the entrepreneurial spirit; and the same rates (27% agree and 32% somehow agree) confirm that there is a lack of apprenticeship opportunities in their region to cultivate their private sector skills.

During all 14 workshops, participants were asked to make proposals which they feel would improve the entrepreneurial ecosystem in their region. Thanks to participants' creativity and engagement, some good ideas were raised, many of which were similar or overlapped in some ways across the regions. General findings and ideas proposed by youth could be grouped into four main themes outlined below, along with recommendations for further action.

1. ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Young people lack access to information about entrepreneurship and support opportunities

KEY INSIGHTS

In most regions, participants mentioned that they are not sure what kind of support is offered by the different institutions; some claimed there are responsibility overlaps between support institutions; and almost all regions mentioned that there are no clear guidelines on what documents are needed or clear processes to follow for start-ups.

Social media and email top the list of favourite sources of information for youth who participated in the 14 workshops, followed by civil society activities and posters they find at the regional employment office, while printed press was at the bottom of the list as a source of information.

Figure 2: Key sources of information for youth, based on quantative survey results

MEDIA	Agree	Somehow agree	Total
Social media	54	31	85
Email	52	31	83
Civil society activities	36	41	77
Posters at employment office	33	41	74
University events	35	34	69
TV	34	27	61
Radio	22	32	54
Printed press	14	33	47

Another important finding during the workshops was the huge innovation gap between coastal regions and interior regions; sectors like ICT, robotics, design, arts, culture, gastronomy, translation were relatively unheard of. Any sectors with production of added value were also not perceived or known as sectors with potential in most regions where workshops were conducted. Internet usage tends to be restricted to Facebook and platforms like AirBnB and Etsy have almost never been heard of.

When questioned about what economic sectors represent high investment opportunities in their regions, groups within same region did not disagree on the promising sectors that would uplift their region socio-economically, but agreed that there is little if no promotion around opportunities in the regions to attract investment and encourage funding for their project ideas.

In the quantative survey 31% agree and 37% somehow agree that better regional promotion will attract investment and foster enterprise creation. When asked to identify the most promising economic sectors in their region agriculture, trade and services topped the list, whilst the least promising sectors were considered to be ICT, tourism and design (see figure 3 below).

Figure 3: High potential sectors, based on quantative survey results

SECTOR	Agree	Somehow agree	Total
Agriculture	54	26	80
Trade	38	37	75
Services	25	40	65
Industry	26	36	62
Education	21	40	61
Healthcare	25	32	57
Handicrafts	19	37	56
Food Industry	22	33	55
Transport	16	39	55
Construction	15	35	50
Finance	15	35	50
ICT	13	29	42
Tourism	21	20	41
Design	10	31	41

SOLUTIONS FROM YOUTH

Almost all regions proposed some sort of information platform in various ways, from a WhatsApp number to chat with and get information from, all the way to a website outlining 'How to start a business' process; involved institutions, what their mission is; downloadable forms to fill out and clear updated guidelines.

Almost all regions also agreed that there is a need to promote their region as a destination with untapped opportunities and not only a region in need of development.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITIES

- Development of a website or platform (e.g. mashrou3i.tn) where all information related to entrepreneurship and starting a business in Tunisia is centralized. This would include clarification on legal, tax, training and funding opportunities per region as well as providing clarification on the different services that each business support institution provides (e.g. APII, Centre d'affaires, ANETI, CEFE).
- Identification and promotion of high-potential sectors in the regions through a regional and national PR campaign, driven by youth and local support institutions.

2. PERCEPTIONS

Perceptions about entrepreneurship and the national image of the interior regions are distorted

KEY INSIGHTS

Entrepreneurship by definition is for those that want to take career, financial and lifestyle risks to realize a dream or an idea. The workshops seemed to show that youth have a distorted perception of entrepreneurship as an alternative financial solution to a public sector job which does not exist anymore.

Entrepreneurship is not a dream nor a fun adventurous journey that the youth aspire to live; but the one and only hope for a decent life. Despite government efforts to promote entrepreneurship as a viable career path, entrepreneurship is not the dream of every unemployed youth.

Entrepreneurial adventures remain a mystery for many of the young people that attended the workshops; there are no clear reasons why some projects get funded and why others do not. For those that do get funded and start, there is no information about their success or failure or any lessons learnt.

Youth also expressed their concerns about the national image and perceptions of their region, influenced by negative national media, which mostly highlights security issues, travel threats, unemployment, low youth motivation to work and poverty. Most believed that this further weakens the chances of their region to uplift itself, and is an important factor in decreasing interest to invest in their region.

These findings were also mirrored in the quantitative survey. Whilst lack of funding and preferring to look for a job were identified as the main reasons young people prefer not to start a business, not trusting the future of their region and the perception they lack the necessary skills or entrepreneurial spirit were also identified as a major contributing factors (see figure 4 below).

Figure 4: Reasons young people do not start a business, based on quantative survey result

Young people are afraid to start a business because:	Agree	Somehow agree	Total
Lack of funding	55	32	87
Prefer to look for a job	52	26	78
Don't trust the future of my region	36	36	72
It is too complicated	26	38	64
Dont' have the needed skills	23	38	61
It's not part of our culture	26	35	61

SOLUTIONS FROM YOUTH

Most regions asked to be in contact with existing entrepreneurs to get real life stories, get inspired, learn from good practices or mistakes, and get practical advice from experienced entrepreneurs about launching a business. The ideas ranged from a YouTube channel showing business start-ups in the target regions to networking opportunities for entrepreneurs to meet aspiring entrepreneurs and exchange, learn, advise and strengthen mutual opportunities.

Participants also felt that some positive stories about the region's opportunities, culture and ambitious youth could improve the national perception of the interior regions.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITIES

- Promotion of entrepreneurship as something hip, fun and inclusive.
- Explore option for radio interviews or a radio show in the regions, with experienced entrepreneurs and start-ups engaging in honest dialogue about their experiences, with the possibility for people to phone-in and ask questions.
- Diagnostic study on potential for a Youtube or TV show with entrepreneurs from the regions in a 'Dragons Den' or 'X-Factor' competition style.
- Positive promotion of the regions through regional and national PR campaign in collaboration with youth.
- Further explore idea of 'speed dating' events to network aspiring and existing entrepreneurs and foster knowledge sharing.

3. CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Cultural transformation among youth and business support institutions is needed to improve the entrepreneurial ecosystem

KEY INSIGHTS

Almost all participants talked about the need to improve communication between the local administration and aspiring entrepreneurs, in order to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem. When submitting business plans for review or when asking for permits to start their business, the majority of youth participants seemed to not comprehend the file processing time, rejection or acceptance reasons and claimed that some business plan change requests, often do not fit market reality, which highlights a need for a better communications strategy between administration and aspiring entrepreneurs.

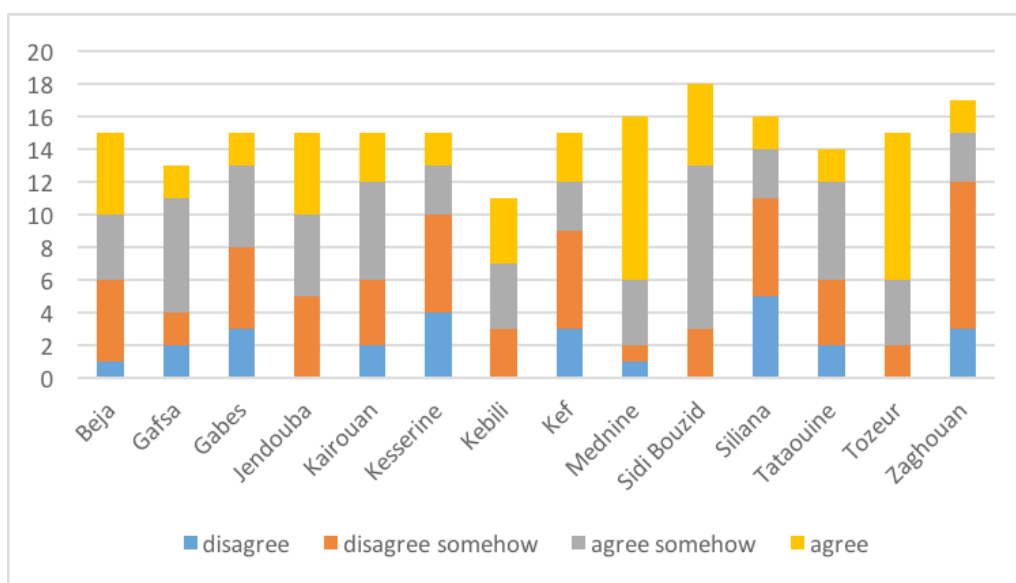
Youth entrepreneurship was considered by most focus group participants as the only way for a dignified lifestyle today, as there are a few other choices available in their regions. Nevertheless, throughout school and university, entrepreneurship classes or entrepreneurship spirit development are not part of the education system to make youth readier or make their business adventures less risky.

SOLUTIONS FROM YOUTH

To improve communication, proposals varied from training and monitoring government staff on the efficiency of the services provided to creating an association that would monitor filed requests processing times and active participation in approval/rejection decision making, to ensuring more transparency and involving people from the private sector in the decision making processes.

A few groups proposed entrepreneurial spirit development exercises at high schools and universities or extra-curricular activities to encourage risk taking, problem solving, innovation and a more optimistic look at entrepreneurship as a solution and not alternative to unemployment. This was also reflected in the quantitative survey with over 70% of participants in Sidi Bouzid, Tozeur, Medenine, Kebili, Jendouba and Gafsa agreeing educational reforms would have a positive impact on entrepreneurship and job creation.

Figure 5: Participants views per region on if educational reform will improve job creation



RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITIES

- Foster the development of youth associations to create a stronger voice in dialogue and to strengthen services of business support institutions.
- Work with high-schools to create robotics clubs, ICT clubs, music clubs, heritage clubs to promote entrepreneurship and help youth find their passions at an early stage.
- Offer entrepreneurial training at universities (as some universities only offer entrepreneurial culture course) – consider HP LIFE integration in universities.
- Carry out “Mashrou3i challenge” events to bring together startup enthusiasts and generate innovative ideas.

4. NETWORKS

New networks need to be catalysed and a network of change agents in the regions supported

KEY INSIGHTS

Youth in the region, do not seem to believe in their power to shape their future in post-revolution Tunisia, but by just taking part in a 1-day workshop, they were able to share, learn and get surprised at how similar their issues are. To render the system more efficient for them, they all saw the importance of being together, under some sort of union or NGO, through which they could advocate for each other's rights, propose solutions and push for reform.

Access to finance remains the main challenge facing aspiring entrepreneurs (see figure 4 on page 9). Participants shared their frustrations at not being able to get business plans approved and were unaware of how to connect with potential financial investors and alternative forms of financing.

Some participants mentioned the valuable work of incubators in their regions but that office spaces are often blocked by entrepreneurs for long periods of time, not allowing space for new entrepreneurs to move into them and also benefit from this initiative.

SOLUTIONS FROM YOUTH

A large number of regions proposed initiating a hub or network, where they could meet regularly, either to discuss a specific start-up theme or to invite decision makers and make them aware of their ecosystem improvement proposals or just to advocate together to make the ecosystem more in their favour. Collaborating to resolve their challenges, all agreed would be much more efficient than each individual struggling on their own.

Another interesting proposal was related to private sector or civil society investing in start-ups, which most youth who participated at the workshops, considered as an opportunity which could provide an alternative funding mechanism that needs to find its place in the ecosystem. This could be achieved by creating opportunities or initiatives where successful businessmen or NGO's meet young aspiring entrepreneurs and learn about their project ideas and become funders, partners or customers.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITIES

- Regional workshops for pitching business plans to banks, investors and to explore alternative financing schemes. Start-up businesses would receive coaching beforehand to prepare and refine business plans for presentation.
- Help improve the services of business incubators (expanding area or limiting the time of hosting entrepreneurs to free space for additional ones).
- Diagnostic study for a hub, association or space in the regions where young people could meet, work and organize events.

CONCLUSION

The focus group research was a timely and unprecedented activity in the regions and well received by the young people who participated. Just by sitting in the same room for one day, they were able to share, learn, network and realize they are all united in the challenges they face.

Many creative ideas were raised, which have been outlined in this report and need to be further explored in the youth communication campaign. A key challenge will be to restore the perception of entrepreneurship, where the objective is not the 'start', but rather a long journey of achievements. Entrepreneurship needs a new identity, where it is rendered hip, fun and inclusive.

The young people are educated, attached to their regions and ready to fight to improve them. Their positive energy is dormant, waiting for the right circumstances to be unleashed for their own benefit and the benefit of their region. To make the system more efficient for them, they all saw the importance of being together, under some sort of union, NGO or start up hub, through which they could advocate for each other's rights, propose solutions and push for reform. Most of them have never experienced such unity and would need coaching to help focus on designing solutions and working together with the administration for a better future for their region.

The communication plan will be most effective if it is inclusive to all operators in the field of enterprise creation and development; if there is no change in the public-sector services, pro-entrepreneurship communication plans will only add to youth demotivation. Therefore, it is also recommended that part of the youth communication campaign includes a dedicated plan for the public sector.

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