



# Tunisia ICT Competitiveness Project Newsletter

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## PROJECT VOICES

### FROM THE WORKFORCE TEAM

Speaking at the launch of the workforce training activity described in this issue, Mr. Wassel Berrayana, CEO of an IT company based in Sousse, expressed a universal sentiment shared by our Tunisian partners: "I firmly believe that the real capital of an IT company are its human resources." The Project's workforce team provides assistance to help companies strengthen this critical resource as they expand the quality and scope of their services.

Our team works closely with private companies in the ICT and ICT-enabled sectors, training providers, professional associations, and government counterparts to identify and address shortfalls in the labor market. Our work spans the full spectrum of activities defined by two mutually reinforcing goals: equipping aspiring Tunisian workers with skills critical for further career growth, while helping employers create new jobs and fill them with the best qualified candidates.

Together, these two objectives help foster the professional growth of the bright, achievement-driven men and women we work with. The vision we share with our Tunisian counterparts is that when these processes are repeated over time and across a wide scale, they will fuel inclusive and sustained growth – both in the ICT and ICT-enabled sectors and in the economy as a whole.

## Workforce Training Courses Organized by the USAID Project Bring Participants One Step Closer to Career Goals

**H**ouwayda Harzallah, 26, who graduated last spring from the National School of Engineering in the city of Sousse (85 miles south of Tunis), was recently given a special opportunity by her new employer, Proxym-IT, to better prepare for her new job. Trained as a software engineer, Ms. Harzallah aspires to do far more than software development. So she was thrilled when Proxym-IT, a Sousse-based firm specializing in web and mobile applications, selected her among its new recruits invited to polish their interpersonal skills in an interactive course it offered with the assistance of the USAID Tunisia ICT Competitiveness Project.

"I am no longer afraid of picking up the phone and calling a prospective customer, or making an effective presentation at a public event," Ms. Harzallah said. "My new managers will

not hesitate to assign me to any sales or marketing duties in addition to developing software. Being in the heart of interactive group activities was definitely a great way to overcome my communication shortcomings."

The course, focused on honing the skills needed for workforce success, along with another course in business English, illustrate the Project's Business Skills Training and Job Placement activities. The classes were co-financed by the two participating Sousse companies, Proxym-IT and Apptiv-IT, and taught on site by two local training organizations selected by the Project in a competitive process.

The trainings tightened the workforce skills and English language gaps identified by the employers among their newly recruited staff, and aimed to provide paramount tools and approaches



Right: Houwayda Harzallah, Ines Mokhti, and Ismail Messaoud were among a group of newly recruited workers in the city of Sousse who benefitted from workforce training courses provided with the support of the USAID Tunisia ICT Competitiveness Project.

for aspiring professionals, including marketing and customer service, effective oral and written communication, initiative, and teamwork.

Speaking after the Workplace Success training, Mr. Ismail Messaoud, 24, an engineer from the southwestern city of Gafsa and a colleague of Ms. Harzallah at Proxym-IT, said he was particularly grateful for a chance to pick up “personal assets” at the course, including training in such key interpersonal skill areas as stress management, leadership, and responsibility.

“In the past, I’ve had some difficulty managing relationships with my supervisors and my colleagues,” Mr. Messaoud said. “But now, I am confident that I can deliver proper reporting, communicate with teammates in a more collaborative manner, and use smarter tactics of organizing my time and reducing stress.”

A common sentiment expressed by participants was that the trainings represented a welcome response to the

**Right:**

Mr. Wassel Berayama, CEO of Proxym-IT, a Sousse firm participating in the recent round of employee training, welcomes participants during the program launch.



rapidly expanding professional horizons in the dynamic ICT and ICT-enabled sectors.

Mr. Mohamed Ali Touati, a student in the Business English skills training, is a recent graduate from the Sousse Institute of Computer and Communication Techniques who will specialize in designing mobile applications at Aptiv-IT. For him the training came at a particularly opportune time: he is preparing to travel to Amsterdam, where he will represent

his company in a large two-day event, the BlackBerry World Conference.

Mr. Touati still attends university classes to keep abreast of the latest technologies in the mobile telephony industry. In addition, he is always eager to enhance his English communication skills to open additional career doors. As for many training participants, his professional goals are far reaching: “I aspire to a career as a CEO of a mobile applications company” – with his eyes on both the Tunisian firms and the international markets.

## Project Highlights

- The Project commenced technical assistance to two medium-sized ICT-enabled enterprises: a high-end jeans producer and a brand-name clothing manufacturer.
- The Project provided a training workshop on sales and marketing for 11 mid-level managers anticipating promotion, at its anchor partner Telnet, Tunisia’s largest publicly traded IT services company.
- The Project provided technical assistance in strategic sales for executives of AxeFinance, a company that provides solutions for credit process automation and IT consulting.
- At the invitation of Mr. Mohamed Bridaa, CEO of Microsoft (MS) Tunisia,

the Project briefed MS partner firms on its training services during the annual New Era event organized by Microsoft for its software and hardware distributors.

- In strategic planning assistance to Tunisia’s top olive oil producers, the Project and the companies’ managers developed plans to improve marketing and expand sales and exports, including through technical training and through representation at key international trade fairs.
- In a meeting with senior advisers at the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology, the Project finalized a work plan for technical assistance to the Ministry to draft a new Telecommunications Code

and to prepare a Broadband Gap Analysis over the next six months.

- The Project is working with the Tunisian American Chamber of Commerce on planning public-private roundtable sessions on tax reform, business-enabling environment and access to finance. The roundtables will be held in the next three months, drawing together representatives of the private sector to build consensus for key policy reforms.
- The Project provided support to the Tax Authority (under the Ministry of Finance) in data analysis and guidance in the areas of personal income tax and IT tax law.

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