



Tunisia ICT Competitiveness Project Newsletter

Issue 05, December 31, 2012 – January 11, 2013

PROJECT VOICES

FROM THE ICT-ENABLED SECTORS TEAM

The true transformative power of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) lies in the catalytic effect it has on enterprise productivity beyond the telecommunication markets. When paired with prudent management practices and a qualified workforce, expanded availability of ICT services often enables non-ICT firms to unlock productivity gains, forge market linkages, boost sales and spur robust job creation.

The Project team focusing on ICT-enabled sectors provides technical assistance and training to clusters of small and medium-sized enterprises that stand to gain the most from the enhanced use of ICT. For individual businesses, such as the apparel companies described in this issue, leveraging ICT tools can help streamline operations while reigning in production costs. Replicated across the industry as a whole, these improvements manifest themselves in new job opportunities for workers of all skill levels.

Our team offers a broad range of services to companies we work with: innovative use of ICT applications, strategic and financial planning, quality control, operational efficiency, and market integration support. Our counterparts belong to a diverse range of sectors – including apparel, food processing, manufacturing, and metallurgy – both in Tunis and in the smaller cities and peri-urban areas where this work is often particularly important in creating sustainable employment opportunities.

Right: CRJ, a clothing manufacturing company, benefitted from the Project's technical assistance to ICT-enabled enterprises that helped make its operational processes more efficient.

Photo credit: CRJ

USAID Project Supports ICT-enabled Firms to Increase Productivity

Mr. Rafik Khalladi, the director of quality control at a Tunisian textile and clothing company named CRJ, is confident that the recent technical assistance his firm received from the USAID Tunisia ICT Competitiveness Project is helping CRJ streamline production processes and increase productivity. The Project recently provided technical expertise and training to CRJ and another textile company, Aramys – both belonging to the apparel sector for which ICT holds a particular promise of raising product quality and creating jobs.

CRJ, a company whose factory is located in Ras Jebel, a town 40 miles north of Tunis, is a mid-sized firm with a bold growth agenda. It seeks to double its output of high-end jean and sportswear products this year while expanding its exports to international markets.

The Project's assistance will provide a boost toward that objective, Mr. Khalladi

said. He added that the technical support was particularly timely: "to reach our targets, the company must attract new clients with expectations of high quality, and therefore it must be run as efficiently and as a world-class manufacturing enterprise."

To help CRJ and Aramys achieve this goal, the Project's work focused on resolving a critical constraint to their growth: slow and outdated operational processes. Although CRJ had recently invested in new equipment, it still struggled to reduce its running cost and ensure consistent product quality demanded by higher-end retailers.

Raising operational efficiency – including facilitation of data processing, information exchange, and ICT utilization – was at the core of improvements recommended by the Project. This advice was delivered as part of the recommended lean manufacturing approach, a production practice that helps companies increase



*Before**After*

Above: A streamlined work process and reduced clutter were two immediately noticeable results after the technical assistance provided by the Project to Aramys, a Tunisian textile and apparel firm.

capacity utilization without adding capital investment by eliminating bottlenecks.

Both companies identified lean manufacturing as the solution with the greatest potential for expanding their business, handling more orders and creating more work stations. Correspondingly, Project experts analyzed their operations, made concrete recommendations for different products and services offered, and trained personnel teams tasked with

logistics, quality control, and manufacturing.

Mr. Slim Rekik, the deputy general director of Aramys, expressed gratitude to “the Project and USAID for the training and assistance provided to us,” saying that undertaking the recommended steps will “help Aramys expand its sales from 500 to 700 thousand units per year” and hire new employees.

Mr. Rekik said that what made the Project’s support especially valuable to

Aramys was that it simultaneously enabled change along several dimensions: “Implementing lean manufacturing in the company will allow us to improve the quality of our products and raise productivity of our employees and equipment, in addition to reducing costs and becoming more competitive.”

He added that even as Aramys makes growth strides with the help of the newly adopted procedures, it will be eager to pursue any future opportunities to collaborate with the Project again.

Project Highlights

- The Project provided analysis and research on the embedded software and market outlook for INFOTICA, the IT services business association affiliated with the National ICT Federation. The analysis included forecasts of market-size growth, trends, technology needs, and the impact of technology on the competitiveness of Tunisian companies.
- The Project attended award ceremonies for Tunisian entrepreneurs selected to receive seed capital and technical assistance from an enterprise-promotion program implemented by the African Development Bank, Souk At-tanmia (Investment Souk). The Project

will mentor selected winners in the ICT and ICT-enabled sectors.

- The Project is moving ahead on supporting the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (MICT) in developing a new Digital Communications Code. Draft sections have been developed and will be presented during joint working sessions with the MICT counterparts slated to begin the week of January 21.
- The Project provided a detailed list of data required to complete the broadband gap analysis study to the national telecommunications regulator (INT).

- The Project conducted meetings with eight ICT and four ICT-enabled companies to discuss training and technical assistance needs.
- Hon. Judge Jaouida Guiga joined the Project team to provide expertise on legal and regulatory work and consultations with key stakeholders. Judge Guiga is a distinguished legal professional, who has served as the first woman on Tunisia’s Court of Cassation, President of the Economic Committee in the Court of Appeals in Tunis, and a member of both the Constitutional Council and the Competition Council.