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Tunisia ICT Competitiveness Project Newsletter

New Train-the-Trainers Program Helps Tunisian Garment Manufacturer Boost Efficiency and Morale

Every year, dozens of young Tunisian jobseekers embarking on careers in garment manufacturing obtain more than their first job offer from Sartex, a textile company based in the northern Tunisian city of Monastir. The company also invites them to enroll in its in-house vocational training academy to build their professional skills on the job and receive completion certificates recognized across the country—the only garment manufacturer in Tunisia to do so. For new recruits, many of whom lack secondary-school completion credentials when they come on board, this opportunity marks the start of steady professional growth.

"About 300 young people who complete this apprenticeship course each year actually obtain an official government-approved diploma," said Rachid Zarrad, the company's manager of human resources. "Developing this know-how and expertise builds the quality labor pool of young Tunisians in the long term," he added. And for Sartex, training all of its young

employees to become true members of our organization helps to strengthen its enterprise culture.

The training academy has recently received a new efficiency boost from the USAID Tunisia ICT Competitiveness Project. As Sartex works to increase its production capacity and expand staff ranks to meet steadily growing customer orders, the Project helped it to launch a train-the-trainers program. Designed to reinforce the self-reliance and future sustainability of the in-house academy, the program introduced a solid long-term knowledge sharing mechanism among the company's staff, facilitating the hiring of several hundred new staff members in the process.

The new system has already been a "tremendous help" to the firm, said Rachid. "The USAID Project has enabled us to select and train the first team of our own trainers who will be responsible for the training center in the future. And it has equipped these trainers

with better soft skills."

One such program participant was Chayma, a 21-year-old junior trainer who noticed an immediate improvement in how well she could communicate with apprentices and how quickly they were able to put her tips and advice into practice. "I have learned the enormous importance of highlighting the positive contributions of everyone" while teaching apprentices new skills, she explained.

The challenge faced by the new trainers is to equip new Sartex recruits with knowledge and skills needed to quickly step up to the production plate on the dynamic, bustling manufacturing floor. One of Tunisia's largest garment manufacturing companies, Sartex has



Chayma (left), a 21-year-old junior trainer at Sartex, said that the train-the-trainers course organized by the USAID Project helped her learn critical interpersonal skills.



Safia, a Sartex trainer, is demonstrating production techniques to an apprentice.

around 3,000 staff members spread over five industrial buildings. Started thirty years ago as a 25-person firm to supply existing Tunisian exporters, the company matured to become a specialized manufacturer of jeans and sportswear for major international brands in Europe, Asia and the United States (including such household names as Ralph Lauren, Timberland, and Levi's).

Yet although the company's production volume has soared to 3.5 million items annually, quality control is imperative—and training newcomers in a wide array of high-precision tasks, from material handling to operating machinery, requires trainers to possess vast amounts of patience as well as great attention to detail.

The coaching provided by the USAID Project over a 30-day period to the new trainers emphasized not only the specific workplace competencies but also the necessary interpersonal and communication skills. The better professional organization of the training academy improved communication between the senior and junior team members, Chayma said, and this injected Sartex staff with a new and clearly noticeable sense of purpose. "Most workers have increased confidence and feel more motivated, and as a result they perform better," she added.



Chayma (left) poses with other participants of the train-the-trainers course delivered by the USAID Project to Sartex, a garment manufacturing company.

In the course of its collaboration with the USAID Project over the past six months, Sartex has hired 355 new young workers. Increased motivation also helped to decrease staff turnover, noted Rachid, making the company better able to offer solid, longer term career opportunities.

Speaking after this workshop, Chayma mentioned that she had a better understanding of both the company's goals and her own role

within the organization. "I learned how to set objectives both on my personal and professional levels, and I became more ambitious to acquire new skills and to grow professionally within the company," she said. "I feel more a part of Sartex, and want to contribute further to the organization."

Project Highlights

- The Project launched technical assistance to Arab Soft, a Tunis-based company specializing in software development. The assistance includes gap analysis and subsequent in-depth staff training to help Arab Soft transition to using Oracle application development framework—a tool indispensable for the upgrading and diversifying of the company's services and for maintaining and expanding its staff. Simultaneously, Project specialists in Oracle framework are providing advice and training to several other ICT companies, including training for 17 newly hired engineers of Cynapsis (a developer of Web-based solutions) in database optimization.
- The Project's IT experts began work on a Tunisian website that will link the recently formed SME Finance Pilot Core Group with

BiD Network, a global network of entrepreneurs, mentors and investors, in a coordinated collaboration to support development and financing of Tunisian SMEs. Core Group's members include BIAT (Tunisia's largest private bank), the Bank for the Financing of SMEs, Tuninvest (a private equity investor), SOTUGAR (a credit guarantee institution), and ESPRIT (a private university).

- A day-by-day action plan for preparation for the upcoming Project-supported job fair (scheduled for September 10 in Tunis) was set in place, including all Terms of Reference for local providers of event organization services and web and media coverage. Marketing of the job fair was launched under the name "JobCONNECT 2013," selected in

collaboration with the Project's counterpart, the Confederation of Tunisian Citizen Enterprises.

- Project partner enterprise Opterna, a Virginia-based fiber optic company that has just launched operations in Tunisia, has started its local recruiting drive and training program on schedule. The Project stands to support the in-house training of new employees being hired for Opterna's new Tunisian factory.
- The Project's senior fiscal advisor prepared VAT simulation results for the Ministry of Finance review, and further refined personal and corporate income-tax-related revenue estimates based on alternative reform scenarios.

The USAID Tunisia ICT Competitiveness Project is implemented by International Development Group LLC (IDG, formerly Sibley International) with subcontractor The Pragma Corporation.

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