

Work for progress

Labour Market Case Stories 2019
– Middle East and North Africa

Danish Trade Union Development Agency - DTDA
Confederation of Danish Industry - DI
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ULANDSSEKRETARIATET – DTDA
DANISH TRADE UNION DEVELOPMENT AGENCY



Confederation of Danish Industry



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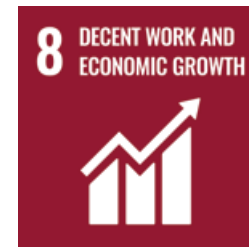
The Consortium for Labour Market and Social Dialogue Development Engagement 2.1 comprises DTDA and DI (with DRC as a sub-contractor). The consortium supports the trade unions and employers' organisations in the MENA countries to promote social dialogue and to work for protection of workers' rights, promote creation of decent jobs, a productive labour market, and sustainable growth.

The consortium supports capacity building of labour market organisations in collective bargaining, social dialogue, dispute resolution, and advocacy for improved legislation and enforcement of legislation, awareness raising for workers' rights, gender equality, and occupational health and safety. The programme is funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme.

The Sustainable Development Goals

The consortium's main SDG focus is goal number 8 (Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all).

While other goals are equally important for achieving the UN 2030 objectives, the consortium considers the SDG8 as a prerequisite to fulfill all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.



Social dialogue clears the way for the waste sector

In Tunisia, the trade unions and employers' associations have been inspired by the Danish Model. For instance, UGTT (Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail) and UTICA (Union Tunisienne de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de l'Artisanat) paid a joint visit in 2019 to the Danish partner organisations and waste handling businesses. The inspiration from Denmark encouraged the social partners to task themselves with continued cooperation on labour market issues such as collective bargaining agreements.

DTDA and DI are supporting the social partners in Tunisia with capacity building and trainings on issues of e.g. social dialogue, CBAs (collective bargaining agreements), and dispute resolution.

In regard to the waste sector, one of the issues is also formulating tasks for the cooperation between the labour market parties and the

municipalities (in handling the waste at the landfills).

In 2019, five enterprise CBAs were concluded in the waste sector. Some of the benefits for workers included productivity and holiday bonuses and educational support bonuses for workers who have children at school.

UGTT and UTICA are now looking at the possibilities for concluding a sector CBA for the waste handling sector. Some of the issues at hand are wages, coverage for temporary workers, and contract issues. By the end of 2019, the parties were drafting demands and negotiation points.

"We hope to achieve more benefits for the waste sector, especially linking employment terms to contracts the companies have with the government," says Makrem Amaria, Secretary-General of the Waste & Municipalities Federation within UGTT.



PHOTO: DI

The Danish Model builds on social dialogue. The main components are collective bargaining agreements, strong labour organisations, and tripartite cooperation. In the Danish Model, wages and working conditions are not set by the government but are agreed upon by social partners.



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Visit to Danish companies leads to better working environments

Height adjustable tables, lifting trucks, and good relations between workers and managers. Denmark has a strong tradition for excellent occupational health and safety in work places. In August, CEO Hany Elnabarawy and 10 other Egyptian business leaders and employers' organisation representatives were in Denmark to see how Danish companies create safe working environments.

The study trip was part of activities on occupational health and safety, a key theme in the partnership between DI and its Egyptian counterpart, the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI) in 2019. Training sessions, structured discussions, and company visits have all played their part in demonstrating the value of occupational health and safety and social dialogue.

"We want to strengthen the social dialogue between the management and employees in our company. Doing this will ensure that our employees feel co-ownership and that will help us make the business more productive," explains Hany Elnabarawy, CEO of the Egyptian industrial production company Arab Mechanical Engineers.

Back in Egypt, Hany Elnabarawy wasted no time putting the inspiration from Danish companies such as Novenco and Dana Lim into action. His company Arab Mechanical Engineers has, amongst others chosen to restructure the health and safety committee to include top management in order to improve the dialogue between workers and employers, erected safe guards to protect employees working at machines, and installed first aid boxes around the factory.



PHOTO: EMAN HELAL

FEI and DI have, together with the Amman Chamber of Industry, created the guide *Health and Safety for people and profit - best practices for occupational health and safety in the Middle East* in order to inspire more companies to invest in a safe working environment.

Visiting companies like Novenco inspired Hany Elnabarawy (second from the left) to action: "A safe working environment can make our company an attractive working place."

Electricity sector powered by social dialogue

In Jordan, Collective Bargaining Agreements have been concluded thanks to a successful social dialogue and negotiation trainings supported by DTDA.

Two CBAs in the electricity sector cover more than 3,000 workers who have benefited from higher wages, improved insurance, etc.

“After participating in the DTDA programme and CBA courses, I gained the ability to formulate the demands and learned good negotiation skills, and I have had the chance to be part of signing a couple of collective bargaining agreements,” says Fakhri Ajarameh from the General Trade Union of Workers in Electricity (GTUWE).

The trainings have been part of the DTDA Training-of-Trainers programme. The aim of the programme is to reach out to local shop stewards and trade union leaders to ensure that they acquire knowledge about legislation and skills to negotiate.

GTUWE has established a new training unit in 2019 to follow up on local demands for training. The target groups of the training unit are both shop stewards and rank-and-file members – and this will help securing sustainability for the future trade unionists.

A direct and positive effect is that more women are joining the ranks of trained shop stewards.

“Educating women in a professional way will transfer expertise and information to unions,” says Kifah Abu-Khiara, another participant in the trainings.

The training in social dialogue and negotiation skills has also been conducted in other sectors. In the food industry, 12 CBAs were concluded for 6,400 workers, and 9 CBAs covered almost 107,000 workers in the public sector.



A Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) is a result of extensive negotiations between employees and employers, a contract determining working conditions, wages, and regulating relations between the parties.

Kifah Abu-Khiara from the General Trade Union of Workers in Electricity (GTUWE).



Knowing your rights as an employee

Dreaming of depending on himself and supporting his family financially at a very young age, Khalil (20) in Karak, Jordan decided to look for a work opportunity that allows him to do so. A year and a half ago, he started working at a cleaning service company. The wage and the working hours were not comfortable. However, Khalil had no other choice but to accept and endure the situation, lest he may lose his sole source of income.

One day, and with no previous notification, Khalil was informed that he has been fired. Without a contract he had no one to turn to. He had to leave in silence and remained unemployed for two months.

Khalil was informed about the Danish Refugee Council's (DRC) legal awareness sessions taking place in Karak governorate.

The sessions aim to raise awareness on different legal topics related to labour law.

Khalil decided to attend one of the sessions and on his first legal day, he was provided with consultation by lawyers. Through the session, he understood that he can file a complaint against his previous employer. When the news reached the employer, he contacted Khalil and offered him his job back.

Khalil accepted as he needed the job, but this time he was informed about his rights as an employee.

"We knew that we were oppressed, but not knowing your rights will keep you stuck in the same situation," said Khalil. Now that he is well-acquainted with his rights as an employee, he encourages his colleagues to understand and demand theirs.



PHOTO: DRC

Khalil regained his job, and he now knows his rights

The negotiation game

Concentration. Play. Deep thinking. Softspoken discussions. All the characteristics of a group of people gathered around a board game are in play. Only this is an educational game about social dialogue, and the players are shop stewards and employers.

The social dialogue board game has been developed throughout 2019 by DTDA and DI in cooperation with the Danish game designing company Serious Games Interactive. Although the game can be entertaining, it is not for leisure but education. The board game will be used in training sessions on social dialogue.

“The aim is to create a safe and different setting for employers and shop stewards to discuss issues of

conflict resolution, negotiations, and social dialogue,” says DTDA Head of Programmes, Lone Ilum Christiansen.

The board game is an emulated business entity, and the players are the two parts, employers and workers. In the initial phase, the two sides formulate values or demands on sustainable growth, decent jobs, and collaboration. In addition, the parties have different skill sets.

Throughout the game, the players are given certain dilemmas that must be solved. For instance, greater production requires more working hours, but how should this challenge be solved, if the business does not have funds for paying the workers overtime?

Will the workers then agree to more flexible hours?

Or, what happens if the workers refuse to use the personal protective equipment?

“The game is a reflection of situations between employers and employees where negotiations and social dialogue make a difference,” says Thomas Skov Hansen, Consultant at DI.

The social dialogue board game is all about negotiations and solutions. The winners are not those who take it all, but those who negotiate the best deal for the team while considering the common interests in sustainable growth and decent jobs. As in real life.



PHOTO: DI

The Social Dialogue game mimics negotiations in real life



New training programme teaches employers in constructive dialogue

Creating good relations between employers and employees requires a skill set that can be hard to acquire on the job. To aid Moroccan companies in achieving social peace and progress, CGEM (La Confédération Générale des Entreprises du Maroc) has with the help of DI established the Social Academy. In 2019, 13 HR managers became the first graduates having followed more than 230 hours of courses in among others conflict management, labour law, and social dialogue.

“I used to think that the best way to manage was by giving fines,” explains Amina Kamal who is one of the first graduates of the academy. As HR Manager at the steel construction firm Boninox Maroc, which specialises in fabricating industrial installations, her strict approach to discipline has been upended by the course: “Now, my goal is to completely avoid disciplinary actions”

The curriculum of the social academy has been developed in cooperation

between the International Labour Organization, DI and CGEM. Internationally renowned academics are among the teachers. For Amina Kamal updating her knowledge has enabled her to correct wrongdoings and though she only recently graduated, she is already enacting changes at Boninox Maroc.

“I learned that there are some legal measures that I had misunderstood. So now I have made an action plan in order to achieve a high level of social and regulatory compliance. In regard to social dialogue, I have started to improve the communication and social dialogue between the partners, especially with regard to the Works Council and the Health and Safety Committee.

To ensure that the participants have the mandate to implement changes at their full-time jobs, the social academy is a paid service. The good results and highly media-covered graduation ceremony have ensured that a great interest in securing one of the spots in the academy’s second year.



PHOTO: AHMED LOUAHY

“The training made me realise that building trust between the social partners is my primary task. Then they can ensure a good production and working environment together,” says Amina Kamal.

DI has been working with CGEM since 2006. In 2019, activities included a bipartite labour mediation fund, lobbying for changes to the labour code, and the integration of informal construction workers into the formal economy.



So much injustice! I had to do something

Fatiha Khourtal's passion is to give women a voice. Her focus has been on gender equality for the past 27 years where she has been part of the Moroccan trade union movement.

"I want to help women to improve their conditions and rights on the labour market and in life in general", she says.

That is why she is a member of the DTDA-supported regional Gender Equality Network where women from the trade unions across the MENA, and from Denmark, meet, exchange experience, and carry out activities to improve gender equality. Like many others, Fatiha Khourtal's work in trade union movement was ignited by her own bad experiences at her workplace.

"I witnessed so many terrible things that I had to do something. I couldn't just watch and let the problems grow.

This is how I started with the trade union movement. It's like a snowball. If nobody stops it, it will grow and grow, and I would have been squished myself", she says.

53 year-old Fatiha Khourtal's CV include a long list of important posts. She is a shop steward in the Ministry of Housing, an activist in the federation Union Générale des Travailleurs du Maroc (UGTM), and Director of Development in the organisation Foundation of Peace for Social Development. She has studied law and economics, and she is a member of the Danish-Arab Gender Equality Network since 2015.

"We are able to benefit from the experiences of each other," she says.

"We might have some issues in Morocco for which the Jordanians have some good solutions. For

instance, I'm very inspired by the way they conduct workshops about violence against women. This makes me think out of the box and be more creative about the solutions to the same problems back home"

The network continues, and the most important task is the implementation of the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention (C190) throughout the MENA region. The MENA countries have the lowest average for gender equality in workplaces (World Bank, 2019) and in general, women's rights are widely abused.

ILO Convention 190 on violence and harassment protects workers from violence and harassment directed at persons because of their sex or gender. It was adopted at the International Labour Conference in 2019.



PHOTO: MOHAMED HASSAN

Fatiha Khourtal, member of the DTDA-supported regional Gender Equality Network.



Tunisian employers embrace the SDGs

On the 10th of December, the official Human Rights Day, Tunisia's largest employers organisation UTICA signed up as adherents to the UN Global Compact. The signing ceremony was part of a seminar on "the Sustainable Development Goals and the private sector" arranged with the support of DI. UTICA had chosen the symbolic date to show that the private sector is a driving force for a set of human and universal values.

United Nation's Global Compact is a pact that encourages businesses worldwide to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies in support of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. With more than 9,500 companies involved, it is the world's largest voluntary corporate sustainability initiative.

At the signing ceremony, the president of UTICA, Samir Majoul, noted that the private sector is a locomotive

of development and progress. As a creator of value and wealth, it provides jobs for young people, produces goods and services that facilitate and improve people's lives.

"Today, we need to join forces to boost corporate membership and thus to strengthen the Tunisian network of the United Nation's Global Compact. A network that seeks to make corporate sustainability a transformative force in achieving a secure, sustainable and shared future," Samir Majoul said.

UTICA is now working to double the amount of Tunisian companies adhering to Global Compact over the next three years. To facilitate this process, DI has shared methods that have helped drive a sustainable transformation in Danish companies and helped teach them to UTICA managers and Tunisian business leaders.



UTICA's president Samir Majoul signs the letter of adhesion, addressed to the UN Secretary General, António Guterres.

DI has been working with UTICA since 2012. In 2019, activities also focused on increasing their capacity to negotiate collective bargaining agreements in preparation for the more than 50 sector-wide negotiations that will commence in the first half of 2020.

Workers' rights are human rights

The MENA countries in general have a poor track record when it comes to human rights including workers' rights.

To compile documentation and draw a picture of the violations of rights, the regional Arab Trade Union Confederation (ATUC) has established a media network that monitors, writes reports on, and maps out violations of rights. ATUC is supported by DTDA, and has a vast outreach as the organisation covers countries throughout the entire Middle East.

"We use the documentation for campaigning for human rights", says Hind Benammar, Coordinator for ATUC, which publishes a map of the MENA region that shows various types of violations.

"In regard to workers' rights, there are two trends," Benammar says, "for the Gulf states, it is typically abuse of migrant workers and forced labour.

For the North African countries, it is more likely the fundamental rights such as the right to strike and the right to organise that are violated".

The campaign work was successful when ILO (at the International Labour Conference) in 2019 put Algeria and Egypt on the surveillance list (the "black list"). Also, the reports are used for the International Trade Union Confederation's (ITUC) Global Rights Index. ATUC has decided to continue the media network and has published five reports in 2019, amongst those a report documenting the difficult working conditions for media and journalists in Egypt. The reports are compiled by journalists.

"We have observers in the MENA countries who report on local cases of violation. This means that you at any time will be able to click on the Violations Map on the ATUC website and have the updated information on each country".

There are many more violations than ATUC is able to capture, and obviously the monitoring has to be carried out with outmost caution, as many of the MENA countries are oppressive towards freedom of information. This is one of the reasons that the media network also provide trainings in cyber security and safe exchange of information.

One of the major accomplishments for the media network was the adoption by the MENA countries of the ILO Convention 190 on violence and harassment in 2019.

"Gender equality and for instance homosexuality are frowned upon across the Arab region because of cultural and religious beliefs. It was a huge success to have the countries accept this in 2019", Hind Benammar explains.



PHOTO: JAMIL GHAFURI

Hind Benammar, Coordinator for ATUC

The member States of the ILO meet at the International Labour Conference (ILC) every year in Geneva, Switzerland. It is a tripartite venue where international labour standards, declarations of fundamental principles, general labour questions, global labour reports, and resolutions are discussed and adopted.



In solidarity with Jordan

The Danish Union of Electricians is supporting, via DTDA, the Jordanian electricity workers' union (GTUWE). The union-to-union solidarity support has, among other things, resulted in improved Collective Bargaining Agreements.

"The electricity workers have gained more bargaining power", says an enthusiastic Ali Al-Hadeed, president of GTUWE, when asked about the benefits of the Danish solidarity support.

Another branch of the support is training of shop stewards and a computerised system for organising and monitoring collective bargaining agreements.

GTUWE has also established a committee, which has strengthened the CBA negotiations. It has done a tremendous difference for the different groups within the electricity sector, Ali Al-Hadeed thinks.

"We've formed a number of teams within the union. This way, we've

achieved more rights for the members, and we have signed more agreements", he says.

The union also has created a website on which members and others with an interest are able to read news about the electricity sector and updates on working conditions for electricians.

The Jordanian and Danish electricians have met regularly since the beginning of the solidarity project. The Jordanian union leaders were invited as distinguished guests at the 2018 convention of the Danish Electricians, and Ali Al-Hadeed is grateful for the Danish support:

"Our members have benefitted tremendously, and we hope that the good relationship will continue in the future", he says.

The Danish Electricians are hoping too that the cooperation will continue the coming years.



PHOTO: DANSK EL-FORBUND

The president of the Danish Union of Electricians, also vice president of DTDA, Jørgen Juul Rasmussen have visited colleagues in Jordan – and vice-versa.



National Council for Social Dialogue

In 2019, the Tunisian National Council for Social Dialogue went to work. The opening session of the council took place in November 2018, and throughout 2019, the council has summoned in February and November.

The council is tripartite and tasked to build a constructive social dialogue between the trade union confederation UGTT (Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail), the employers' association UTICA (Union Tunisienne de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de l'Artisanat), and the Tunisian government. The aim is to investigate, and be consulted on, matters that influence the social and economic situation in Tunisia.

The council advises on laws tabled in the parliament, and oversees the negotiations between the social partners, of issues that are defined by the six sub-committees within

the council: Human development, professional relations, social security, regional development and primary sector strategies, productivity, and the informal economy.

"The social dialogue will be reinforced at all levels (regional, local, sectors), and the aim is to secure the principles of decent jobs and to promote the competitiveness of our businesses," UGTT Secretary-General Nouredine Taboubi said to Tunisian media at the opening session.

At the same event, UTICA president Samir Majoul said: "The council will be a main institution in a democratic state and is a symbol of a participatory approach towards managing development"

The Minister of Social Affairs, Mohamed Trabelsi, agreed, and

praised the good work and progress made by the social partners.

Social Dialogue has been essential for the development of Tunisia since the Arab Spring in 2011. Long and hard negotiations resulted in 2013 in an agreement, a social contract, between the trade unions, employers, and the government. The principles for cooperation on democratic, social, and economic development were outlined. In 2015, the partners of "the national dialogue quartet" were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (UGTT, UTICA, the bar association, and the Tunisian League of Human Rights.).

DTDA and DI are supporting UGTT and UTICA to promote social dialogue and supported the development of the social contract in 2013, and the establishment of the National Council for Social Dialogue.



PHOTO: DTDA

In 2011, Tunisia was the forerunner of the Arab Spring. In spite of conflicts and tough negotiations, the social partners are engaging in tripartite social dialogue.

Social dialogue includes all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy.



Business and government improving working conditions together

Bipartite and tripartite dialogues are key to improve labour market conditions. But how do you create this type of dialogue in countries where there are no free trade unions?

In Egypt, the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI) and DI have chosen to focus the dialogue on workers' health and safety on the factory floor level. Good working environment can improve productivity and workers' engagement at the workplace.

Activities with specific companies have, amongst others, lead to improvements of the physical workspace, changes in how companies cooperate across departments, and changes in human resource policies that raise staff's job satisfaction and company loyalty.

To spread knowledge about the benefits of improving the occupational health and safety (OHS) in companies, FEI has established a Collaboration Network. Here, the shop floor experiences can be shared

with all the stakeholders that influence OHS. Representatives from OHS agencies, ministries, experts, NGOs, organisations, and companies now hold regular meetings to share best practices.

According to director Mohamed Khaleel, Ministry of Manpower, "it is important that OHS has a focus on prevention of hazards and accidents on workers in due time. A good working environment is good business and thus good for Egypt," he says.

He emphasises that inputs from the workers are key to avoid unhealthy jobs, reduce absenteeism and losses in productivity.

Director Khaleel concludes that after his participation in many network meetings, the Collaboration Network is an excellent way to have a professional dialogue on how Government's laws and regulation can create and implement real developments in healthy jobs and economic growth in the companies.



PHOTO: DI

"I am impressed about how companies successfully engage their employees in ensuring a safe and healthy working environment," says Mohamed Khaleel who took part in a study trip to Denmark in 2019.

Currently, the network is working on a position paper to amend the labour law focusing on the part of OHS, such as special Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) against chemical and physical hazards and display of identification signs that indicate the danger posed by chemicals on site.

DI and FEI created the Collaboration Network for Occupational Health and Safety in 2018. The network provides a basis for collaboration among OHS agencies, the private sector, experts, NGOs, governmental institutions and organisations. In 2019, the network has become an effective advocate for OHS reforms in Egypt.



Youth Innovation Summit 2019



PHOTO: DI

October 2019, DI participated in Youth Innovation Summit in Morocco. DI was responsible for the Danish pavilion where young Moroccans met innovative, Danish enterprises that are working with the Sustainable Development Goals in different ways.

Amongst those were Shape Robotics that held a busy coding workshop on the basis of their didactic robot, Fable. In 2020, Shape Robotics has agreed to mentor young, Moroccan talents who participated in the summit."





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