

# Reforming the Legacy of an Authoritarian State: The Case of Tunisia

Markus Steinich, Thomas Fiegle, Anne Hitzegrad, and Agnes Wiedemann\*

*Tunisia's revolution in 2011 was triggered by, among other reasons, the public administration's bureaucratic despotism. To address this, Tunisia's new constitution, which was approved in January 2014, contains the guiding principles of democracy and decentralization as well as a public administration at the service of the citizens and the common good. It thus entails a major public-sector reform program that aims at a complete overhaul of the country's public administration and its relationship with the citizens. This leaves the country with an overwhelming implementation challenge.*

*Financed by the German government,<sup>1</sup> the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) has been supporting governance reforms at the municipal, regional, and national levels in accordance with the new constitution. This article deals with the following four implementation processes:*

- 1. Governance training for change: How to train Tunisian officials to enable change*
- 2. Making a sector ministry fit for decentralization: How to support a dis-oriented line ministry with a centralistic culture to become an active proponent of local and regional autonomy*
- 3. Transforming Tunisia's training center for decentralization: How to improve the response to existing and new training requirements at the municipal, regional, and national levels*
- 4. Municipalities acting for tomorrow – Bringing youth to the table: What a “youth-friendly city” can look like, and how stakeholders can contribute to a local youth policy*

---

\* All authors are GIZ staff who are currently working – or have worked until recently – in Tunisia: Agnes Wiedemann and Thomas Fiegle work as project directors; Anne Hitzegrad is a governance expert; Markus Steinich is the acting cluster coordinator.

1 GIZ implements the program on behalf of BMZ.

*Based on these cases, the following guiding principles for implementation were identified: Trust is necessary to enable the identification of partners' needs; long-term partnerships are useful for trust-building and scaling-up; action-training or training for change increases the possibility of real change; change has to take place on the individual, organizational, and system levels; participation is essential for ownership, integration, and knowledge management; and, finally, cooperation with national and international expertise broadens support quality and coverage.*

### *Context of the case study*

Mohamed Bouazizi was one of many young men frustrated by oppression and a lack of prospects. He had complained about harassment by officials on several occasions, but the confiscation of his wares in December 2010 and yet another beating by officials pushed him over the edge. In protest, he set himself on fire in front of the governor's office. In an attempt to calm public outrage, Tunisia's long-time president, Ben Ali, visited the unconscious Bouazizi in the hospital. However, public sympathy and anger inspired by Bouazizi's death finally led to the ousting of Ben Ali and his regime. Uprisings also erupted in other North African and Arab countries, such as Egypt, Libya, and Syria, and collectively became known as the "Arab Spring."

One of the main triggers of Tunisia's Freedom and Dignity Revolution was this despotism of the public administration. Three years after the death of Bouazizi, the revolution's quest for freedom and democracy finally found its expression in Tunisia's new constitution, approved in January 2014. It contains in its guiding principles (Arts. 1–20) the following prescriptions:

- Having taken a leading role during the Arab Spring movement, youth shall be an active force in building the nation (Art. 8).
- The state shall seek to achieve social justice, sustainable development and balance between regions based on development indicators and the principle of positive discrimination (Art. 12).
- The state commits to strengthen decentralization and to apply it throughout the country, within the framework of the unity of the state (Art. 14).

- Public administration is at the service of the citizens and the common good. It is organized and operates in accordance with the principles of impartiality, equality, and the continuity of public services, and in conformity with the rules of transparency, integrity, efficiency and accountability (Art. 15).

Title VII of the constitution (Arts. 131–142) elaborates on the country's new administrative structure and its characteristics:

- Decentralization is achieved through local authorities comprised of municipalities, districts, and regions covering the entire territory of the Republic (see Art. 131).
- Local authorities are headed by elected councils; the electoral law shall guarantee the adequate representation of youth in local councils (see Art. 133).
- Local authorities possess their own powers, powers shared with the central authority, and powers delegated to them from the central government (see Art. 134).
- Local authorities shall have their own resources, and resources provided to them by the central government, these resources being proportional to the responsibilities that are assigned to them by law (see Art. 135).
- Local authorities shall adopt the mechanisms of participatory democracy and the principles of open governance to ensure the broadest participation of citizens and of civil society in the preparation of development programs and land use planning, and follow up on their implementation, in conformity with the law (see Art. 139).

*The new constitution thus entails a major public-sector reform program that aims at a complete overhaul of the country's public administration. This presents the country with an overwhelming implementation challenge, given the following features of Tunisia's public administration:*

- **State-driven development.** In the 1970s Tunisia adopted a public-sector-led development model. It gave the state an active role in strategic economic sectors. Barriers to entry to large segments of the economy were imposed. Tunisia initially developed well during the 1970s as limited steps were taken to liberalize the economy, notably with the introduction of an “offshore”/privileged export regime, combined with pro-active government industrialization policies. However, when Tunisia was hit by a severe economic crisis in the 1980s, the limits of

the state-led economic model started to emerge. The government reacted by opening up parts of the economy in the late 1980s and 1990s with an offshore sector under consolidation and as part of a process of greater integration with the European Union. However, the core thrust of the economic model remained fundamentally unchanged, as the state retained close control of most of the domestic economy. Today, more than 50 percent of the Tunisian economy is still either closed or subject to entry restrictions. Furthermore, state-owned enterprises (SOEs) hold between 50 and 100 percent of the markets for air transport, railroad transport, electricity, gas, and fixed-line telecommunication. Many SOEs act as monopolists in the production, import, and/or distribution of various goods (e.g., olive oil, meat, and sugar) (World Bank, 2014b).

- **The bloated scale of the civil service sector.** The size of the civil service sector reflects the important role of the state for the country's development. As universities have failed to produce graduates with the qualifications required by the local economy, the state has become an employer of last resort since the turn of this century. Public-sector staff numbers have almost doubled since 2000, with a total today of around 580,000 civil servants in public administration and around 150,000 in SOEs. This number increased more rapidly following the revolution, when municipal temporary workers "managed" to join the long-life employment of the civil service. To compensate people who had suffered from Ben Ali's oppression, they were offered employment in the government sector. In addition, the incoming Islamist party, Ennahda, tried to penetrate the system with its own followers (Brockmeyer, Khatrouh, & Raballand, 2014; Union Tunisienne du service public et de la neutralité administrative, 2016). The fiscal consequences can be seen in 2016's national budget, in which salaries represent 44 percent of total expenditure.
- **Corruption.** The omnipresent nature of the state, coupled with an excessively high number of poorly paid civil servants, reportedly creates a breeding ground for rent-seeking practices. According to a World Bank report:

The prevalence of corruption "to speed things up" in Tunisia is among the highest in the world by international standards. More than a quarter of all firms in the World Bank 2014 Investment Climate Assessment declared they have to provide some form of informal payment to accelerate some form of interaction with the administration. The prevalence of

corruption associated with the regulatory burden points to the importance of discretion and arbitrary application of the rules. Hence, in addition to the direct costs, the excessive regulatory environment also stifles competition by allowing inefficient firms to gain unfair advantages via privileges and corruption. These practices have a cost that goes beyond the corruption itself – they prevent the success of the best-performing firms and thereby lower the performance of the entire economy. (World Bank, 2014b)

Corruption as well as discretionary and arbitrary application of the law not only hold true for economic activity but can also be observed in each and every interaction of citizens with the state.

- **A centralized state.** Tunisia remains a highly centralized state, despite the fact that it had 264 municipalities and 24 regional development councils already under Ben Ali's regime. Assignments and resources for the local administrations were limited and dominated by the state. Although there were elections, political competition was rather limited. Municipalities covered only one-third of the country's territory, and one-third of the Tunisian population was unserved by a local administration. Today, municipal investments account for only around 3 percent of national investments, and municipal expenditures only for around 4 percent of total public expenditure (World Bank, 2015). Of Tunisia's 580,000 public servants, only 6,900 (i.e., 1.2%) work for the municipalities (Ministry of the Interior, 2016).
- **Risk-averse administrative culture.** Risk aversion and sector egoism are two more main aspects of Tunisian administrative culture. Barriers to reform are high as a result of a reluctance of staff to take ownership of decision-making, the poor communication about decisions made, the lack of information exchange, and that all decisions have to be approved by the highest authority. This is a result of a hierarchical structure that is typical of public administration but also particularly characteristic of the former authoritarian regime.

Sector egoism goes hand in hand with closed structures and vertical chains of command. Information-sharing, coordination, and cooperation between institutions is lacking. Examples of this include draft laws that are not coordinated between ministries, and monitoring data on public investment projects that is not shared between sectors.

*The GIZ good governance project cluster to support public-sector reform*

The German government responded to the Tunisian revolution with substantial and flexible project funding. In order to support the implementation of the new constitution, a GIZ project cluster on good governance was set up. GIZ was granted funding from several schemes for the following projects:

- Financed by the regional fund of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, GIZ was implementing a regional project on municipal cooperation between Moroccan, Tunisian, and Algerian local governments prior to the revolution; initial contacts with the Tunisian Ministry of the Interior had already been established. After the revolution, this project (CoMun – Cooperation with Municipalities) would serve as a platform to host new funding; the first long-term staff arrived in September 2012.
- The German Federal Foreign Office's Transformation Partnership, newly created at the time of the Arab Spring, provided financial support for local democracy formats in selected Tunisian municipalities from mid-2012 onwards; it expanded the range of support for the CoMun project.
- BMZ's Open Regional Fund for Good Governance was managed by GIZ HQ in order to rapidly finance smaller projects (up to €1,000,000), as initiated by projects already under way; CoMun could thus gain funding to support Tunisia's local government association, the Tunisian National Federation of Cities (FNVT – Fédération Nationale des Villes Tunisiennes) and the Ministry of the Interior's decentralization school, the Centre for Training and Support for Decentralization (CFAD – Centre de Formation et d'Appui à la Décentralisation).
- Regional development and the capacities of regional administrations became the focus of a new bilateral project financed by BMZ from the end of 2013 onwards; Germany's technical support thus expanded from the municipal to the regional level.
- In 2014, BMZ started a new type of project funding via its special initiatives. The initiative, "Stability and development in the MENA region," extended the reach of the existing cooperation on regional and municipal governance and ensured funding for Tunisia's newly created International Academy for Good Governance.

After the revolution, GIZ's good governance portfolio in Tunisia had to start from scratch and reached a value of approximately €20 million after four years. The portfolio can be visualized as follows.

Table 1: GIZ's good governance portfolio in Tunisia

<b>NATIONAL LEVEL</b>	<b>Ministry of Development Started in 2013</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Methodology of regional development planning</li> <li>Regional Development Strategy</li> </ul>	<b>Centre for Training and Support for Decentralization (CFAD) Started in 2012</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New training topics and formats</li> <li>E-learning</li> <li>Equipment</li> </ul>	<b>International Academy for Good Governance Started in 2015</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training of change agents</li> <li>Coaching projects for change</li> </ul>
	<b>Ministries of the Interior, Local Affairs, Finance, as well as other sector ministries Started in 2012</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legal and institutional framework on decentralization and deconcentration</li> </ul>	<b>Tunisian National Federation of Cities (FNVT) Started in 2013</b> Capacity development for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lobbying</li> <li>service delivery</li> <li>networking</li> </ul>	
<b>REGIONAL LEVEL</b>	<b>Northwestern Governorates (Beja, Siliana, El Kef, Jendouba) Central-western Governorates (Kairouan, Kasserine, Sidi Bou Zid), Médenine Started in 2013</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Governance Diagnostics</li> <li>Capacity Development for Regional Development Structures</li> <li>Regional Development Planning</li> <li>Regional Development Project Fund</li> </ol>		
<b>MUNICIPAL LEVEL</b>	<b>Municipalities of Ben Guerdane, Gabès, Gafsa, Jendouba, Kasserine, Menzel Bourguiba, Monastir, Siliana, Sfax, Sousse, Tunis, Le Kef, Kairouan, Beja, Sidi Bou Zid, Tozeur, Thala, Regueb, Sbeitla, Makthar, La Marsa, Testour, Kalaat Landlous, Bizerte Started in 2012</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One-stop shops/ <i>Espaces citoyens</i></li> <li>Participatory budgeting</li> <li>Participatory planning</li> <li>Young citizen's / Civil society participation</li> <li>Women's participation</li> <li>Municipal networking (Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Libya)</li> </ol>		

How did this portfolio evolve? What is the strategy and what were the guiding principles? Why those projects, partners, and contents and not others? This story has to be told in three chronological strands that show how the three building blocks of the cluster came into being.

GIZ was working in Tunisia prior to the revolution. The CoMun project had begun to convince Tunisian authorities of the benefits of municipal

networking in order to contribute to regional integration and constructive dialogue between the Maghreb countries at a local level. This idea had not been accepted prior to the revolution, but a good relationship was established among important decision-makers in the Ministry of the Interior, which created a good basis for sharing concepts.

The revolution opened up the country to international experiences and fresh ideas, and new cooperation was sought. Networking activities began through conferences in Tunisia and Germany, as well as study trips to the Netherlands and Germany regarding decentralization in those two countries. Following the multi-level approach of GIZ, those measures brought together municipalities and national authorities such as the Ministry of the Interior, CFAD, and FNVt right from the start. A policy dialogue thus evolved and – paired with the flexible funding mechanisms of the German government described above – projects became possible with two major multiplication actors: FNVt as the representative of municipal interests and a national platform for inter-municipal networking; and CFAD as the training institute for municipal human resources. Partnerships on a municipal and national level enabled capacity development in its three dimensions: 1) training for professionals on a pilot basis and its up-scaling via CFAD, 2) organizational development in municipal structures, 3) repositioning of municipalities in a more decentralized system due to the technical dialogue with the Ministry of the Interior, the constitutional assembly, and FNVt.

The second strand, concerning regional development, followed the insight that the marginalization of regions from the interior was a major trigger of the Tunisian revolution. The German government therefore accepted a request from the then Minister for Regional Development for cooperation. This started in 2013 with a focus on two macro-regions that had been agreed upon between the two governments. Here again, in order to shape this cooperation, a multi-level approach and GIZ's capacity-development understanding were combined.

The third strand – the project with the International Academy for Good Governance – started as a project financed by the German Federal Foreign Office and executed by the European Academy of Berlin, a private training institute for adult learning with a focus on European issues. From 2012 onwards, seminars were organized on good governance issues in Berlin. This model came to its limits for three reasons: 1) the academy was supposed to be relocated and based in Tunis in order to allow for more participants; 2) it was supposed to be integrated into existing training



institutions in Tunisia; 3) individual learning could not be applied in structures that are not open to new ideas and new practice. In this situation, funding and execution changed: BMZ took over and mandated GIZ, due to its presence in Tunisia and its proven capacity to deal with capacity development beyond the training of individuals.

The portfolio of the cluster is thus the result of an adaptive cooperation management that responds to promising opportunities arising with partner institutions on different levels and builds on key individuals' receptiveness to change. It could not follow a roadmap or a consistent partner policy, as that does not yet exist. But it did follow GIZ's understanding of capacity development and the necessity to be embedded locally, regionally, and nationally, and to connect those three levels in a constructive way.

### *Tracing the implementation process*

GIZ has not yet been able to measure the achievements of projects or policies because it is too soon after the revolution for reforms to have had time to take place. This is also due to our choice of the subject for this article: the implementation of Tunisia's new constitutional agenda on decentralization and good governance. We will therefore describe the processes, in which we are actors, and for which the results are yet unknown. For this purpose, we have selected four implementation processes that are representative of our portfolio in Tunisia. They demonstrate how we work on capacity development, combining the municipal, regional, and national levels.

The four implementation processes that we selected are:

1. Governance training for change
2. Making a sector ministry fit for decentralization
3. Transforming Tunisia's training center for decentralization
4. Municipalities acting for tomorrow: Bringing youth to the table

1. Governance training for change

Tunisia has a tradition of strong administration. This is not only due to French influence during the time of the "Protectorate" but also due to its roots, which go back to Ottoman rule at the end of the 19th century. Senior officials in Tunisian public administration, even today, regard themselves

as being in the role of a “steward of the people’s welfare,” in the tradition of Kheireddine Pacha, a famous Tunisian reformer in 1871. For decades they steered the country’s “modernization from above” on behalf of a highly centralized state and a strongly secularized and reform-oriented socio-economic elite. Although this approach and the related social model proved to be beneficial for Tunisia in the first decades following its independence, since the 1980s it has become less relevant. Even before the autocratic turn of Bourguiba’s successor Ben Ali, public administration had lost its central role in economic and social development and become confronted with a much more complex and economically difficult environment. In the years of Ben Ali’s ruling, the administration lost its credibility among the population due to corruption and nepotism. The result was a profound legitimacy crisis for the political-administrative sector and a deep lack of trust in the state and its agents. This was a cause of the 2011 revolution.

The consequences for the public sector are still being felt today. Public administration is no longer seen by the majority of Tunisians as a force of reform and development but, on the contrary, as a force of resistance, if not corruption. The public administration agents who face public repudiation feel highly disoriented and frustrated. In addition, they are struggling with their changed role in society. Initial and ongoing training in public administration is insufficient and does not address the needs of such a highly conflictual situation.

GIZ discussed this with its partners at the beginning of the process. GIZ supported the view of its Tunisian government partners that the concept of “good governance” – insofar as it de-centers the role of the political-administrative sector in society and stresses the need for collaboration with the private and non-profit sectors in accordance with shared principles and values – could constitute a valuable element of response to this challenge. This has consequences for the training of public officials as well.

Two questions had to be answered. The first one concerns the development challenge of our training project: *How to train Tunisian officials in order to build a modern, citizen-oriented public service based on the principles of good governance?* The second question concerns the implementation challenge: *How to find entry points for change processes in administrative structures and procedures?* Our experiences from other projects showed us that the dimensions, although they can be formally distin-

guished from each other, are in reality interrelated, so that the implementation challenge has to be integrated in the training process itself.

When we started at GIZ in the beginning of 2015 with the project, the project itself had already been in operation for three years and much experience had been accumulated. From 2012 to 2015, the project was entitled “Tunisian-German Academy of Good Governance,” financed by the Germany Federal Foreign Office and executed by the European Academy of Berlin, a private-run institution for political education. The aim was to introduce practitioners from the Tunisian administration and related sectors to the concepts and methods of democratic governance following international standards as well as to give them a practical view of good practices in Germany. Therefore, seminars lasting between one and four weeks each were organized at the site of the European Academy of Berlin – a beautiful old villa in the Berlin quarter of Grunewald. In the three years, more than 270 people participated. All the participants of these seminars reported that not only had they learned a lot but that the vision of their job as a state agent had changed in a significant way. They were enormously impressed by what they had seen and learned in Germany and were impatient to put all this into action once they were back to Tunisia.

However, back in Tunis they found several obstacles to implementing change. Many of the participants’ offices are in poor condition and badly equipped. Their supervisors were resistant to change, and their colleagues were demotivated. They had to work with dysfunctional old structures and procedures. The initial enthusiasm gave way to frustration.

This was the situation when GIZ took over the project at the beginning of 2015.<sup>2</sup> It was clear that it was necessary to readjust the concept of the project: How would it be possible to achieve changes, not only at the level of the knowledge and competencies of people, but also at the level of the so-called collective brain of the organizations these people were working in? In addition, the Tunisian partner, the Services of Good Governance at the Presidency of the Government, wanted more people to benefit from the training and for the Academy to be located in Tunisia. The Services of Good Governance also expected cooperation with the European Academy of Berlin and the study missions in Berlin to be maintained, as they had

---

2 This occurred when, for formal reasons, the project could no longer be financed by the German Foreign Office and was passed over to the BMZ.

had good experiences with it – thus the ties of trust between the directors of the academy and the Tunisians had been built.

When the decision was taken that the new academy would be located in Tunis, there arose another question: Should this Academy be an institution on its own or should it be hosted within an already existing structure? Two options were considered. The first, favored by GIZ, was to build a small but smart training institution with innovative methods in order to train a small number of people as change agents who had already demonstrated the capacity to achieve concrete changes at the organizational level. The second option, preferred by the Tunisian government, was to establish a more conventional training unit enabling a larger number of trainees to benefit. The first option was chosen, and it was decided to host the academy at the Tunisian National School for Administration (ENA) in order to make it operational as quickly as possible. In doing so, we profited from the experiences of GIZ in the domains of training and organizational development. We were able to benefit from the multi-level approach of capacity-building that is commonly used by GIZ.

Two factors enabled the government to follow GIZ's recommendation. Firstly, a Scientific Committee was established with about 20 members from several ministries, state agencies, civil society, trade unions and employers' federations, which helped to establish a constructive discourse among the different stakeholders about training for change. The second factor was that GIZ could refer to the proven experiences of such a small-scale training institute, the Academy for Leadership of Baden-Württemberg, the training institution for higher-level public servants in southwestern Germany. The particular characteristic of this institution is that it offers training courses for higher-level public officials of the region, coupled with organizational development of the region's public administration. The participants develop and implement a real change project ordered and mandated by the government of Baden-Württemberg. The way the state (*Land*) of Baden-Württemberg and the Leadership Academy have organized this process served as a practical inspiration for what we wanted to achieve in Tunisia. The concept for the new Tunis-based academy, now called the International Academy for Good Governance, was developed through a workshop with the members of the Scientific Committee in May 2015, in collaboration with the Academy for Leadership of Baden-Württemberg.

The first training program for "change agents" in Tunis was planned for autumn 2015 for a group of 25 to 35 participants from public administra-

tion, the private sector, and civil society. In July 2015 the Tunisian Ministry of Health mandated the first training program in the area of “Public procurement and management of conflicts of interest in the health sector” and undertook to support the change project that the trainees were to implement upon completion of the course.

This training phase of approximately seven months contained three modules: an introduction to the concept of good governance to international standards; procurement rules and practices in Tunisia; and the management of conflicts of interests in Tunisia and in other countries. Workshops were facilitated by international trainers on leadership, change management, and communication skills. There were two technical missions to Germany: one in cooperation with the Academy for Leadership, and one with the European Academy of Berlin.

Beside the Health Ministry, the Tunisian procurement agency was very much interested in this program. With the support of this agency and its trainers – who already had received a training of the trainers seminar financed by another international donor – it was possible to quickly realize a second program of high quality. A positive unintended side effect was that the representatives of the Health Ministry, who were skeptical regarding the application of Tunisian procurement rules to the health sector – insisting on what they called its “sectoral specificity” and asking for exceptions from these rules – entered into a real dialogue with their Tunisian colleagues from the procurement agency. The Academy was thus able to contribute, albeit unintentionally, to addressing one of the main deficiencies of the Tunisian administrative: its strong sectoralization and the lack of horizontal communication between and within different public services.

The 35 participants are now due to present their “change project” to the Tunisian Minister of Health. Thus, a new and interesting phase of cooperation begins – the action part. The change project contains concrete measures of reform concerning the Tunisian health administration – with indicators and a time schedule so that it can be evaluated. The implementation of this “change project” will be somewhat unpredictable, just as the academy project was, and will need a flexible and adaptive approach from the project managers and the Tunisian partners.

## 2. Making a sector ministry fit for decentralization

Regional inequalities were one of the triggers of the revolution. The interior regions are less developed than the coastal area, according to all indicators, including unemployment rates, school-dropout rates, and availability of medical services. To address this, granting the regions greater autonomy to make their own development decisions, using their own resources, is thus a major objective of Tunisia's decentralization policy, as enshrined in the 2014 constitution.

But this linkage did not seem to be evident to line ministries for several reasons:

- Since independence, regional planning and development has followed a top-down approach that has prioritized a sector focus rather than regional interests.
- There is skepticism by the central authority about the ability of the regions to make rational choices regarding their development priorities and investment projects. Officials in the center are still convinced that central planning is superior to "local irrationality."
- The implementation of the constitution is perceived as a long-term issue with many technical challenges that need to be addressed.
- The topic appeared to be owned by the Ministry of the Interior, a strong player that is not easy to cooperate with.

When GIZ began work with the Ministry of Development in 2013, its administrative system as a whole was paralyzed due to a lack of political leadership following the revolution. This was due to a rapid succession of new governments (there have been seven governments since the revolution in January 2011) and the dominance of overarching topics such as security, the constitutional process, the national dialogue, and the preparation of national elections for the end of 2014. The ministry itself has gone through several restructurings. Originally founded as the Ministry for Regional Development after the revolution, it then merged with the Ministry for Cooperation and International Development in February 2013, became part of the Ministry of Economy and Finance in 2014, and was reinstalled as the Ministry of Development, Investment and International Cooperation in 2015.

The ministry's five-year development plan was abandoned in the aftermath of the revolution. New initiatives such as a national consultation process in 2012 on regional development and the elaboration of a white book

on the topic did not succeed in giving a new orientation to the sector's policy and structure, since they did not become national priorities.

This is the context in which the GIZ project began work on achieving its objective: the improvement of institutional conditions for more effective and participatory regional development. With the new constitution voted in 2014 and a unanimous discussion in the constitutional assembly on this issue, working on institutional conditions could only mean supporting the ministry's work on decentralization questions. The main implementation question thus was: *How to get a "disoriented" line ministry with centralistic habits to become an active proponent of more local and regional autonomy?* This is the implementation process we are interested in regarding our case study. We will look at it from three perspectives: a) tool adaptation, b) institutional reorientation, and c) policy-making.

#### *a) Tool adaptation*

Before the revolution, five-year planning was a top-down process dominated by line ministries and centered on a list of infrastructure projects. This practice stopped after the revolution. It was not until 2015 that the government would restart a new national development plan.

After the revolution, GIZ worked with the Ministry of Environment on a regional plan for the environment and sustainable development with four regions. It soon transpired that the regions wanted a new way of regional planning that would: be more participatory, integrated, and not sectoral; involve a thorough analysis of a region's comparative advantages; and propose projects and reforms based on a regional vision. GIZ developed such a methodology and, together with Swiss Cooperation, helped to elaborate and publish four plans. When the Essid government came to power in January 2015, the new minister for development asked GIZ to advise on the methodology of a new five-year plan. GIZ thus scaled-up its pilot experience and, together with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), supported all 24 governorates in the development of a new regional development plan to link into the country's five-year plan for 2016 to 2020.

b) *Institutional reorientation*

The ministry requested staff training as a main focus of the project. A capacity analysis had been conducted in early 2012, financed by an international development bank. However, the results had not been validated and no activities resulted from the assessment. GIZ took this capacity analysis as a starting point and organized a participatory workshop to confirm the main findings. The workshop included representatives of the 24 regional development directorates, the four supra-regional development offices, and the ministry. It resulted in a working plan that envisioned capacity development based on participatory planning, local development planning, regional development data, socio-economic analysis, and group facilitation. Most of training sessions planned used an “action learning” approach and dealt with real-world issues, data, problems, and solutions. Although this was an unfamiliar approach for our partners, it was appreciated.

The 2012 capacity analysis hinted at structural problems that could not be overcome by the training of individuals alone. This included inefficient communication between different managerial levels, and the lack of consistency between procedures. The ministry also suffered from the weaknesses that plague public administration in general: overstaffing, hierarchical decision-making, risk-aversion, and over-bureaucratization.

GIZ therefore proposed training courses that were combined with public administration change projects, for which organizational development support would be provided by GIZ advisors. The ministry accepted the proposal. Representatives of all three levels of the ministry were selected to participate in a series of five training modules delivered by a Tunisian and a German expert. After the training, small-scale change projects on process management and decision-making were defined, with coaching support from the trainers. This was thus another training innovation with regard to the existing practice, as the issuing of a diploma does not mark the end of the training.

The capacity analysis and the validation workshop also highlighted problems with the ministry’s external relationships – unclear task assignments and unclear relationships with the regional units of other ministries and the governorate administration. Moreover, the new constitution required that the ministries’ deconcentrated structure would have to reposition itself toward the regions and districts as new levels of decentralization.



The ministry asked the GIZ project to finance a study on the issue. However, GIZ instead proposed a working group comprising of staff from the ministry and its regional structures. The group was selected by the Director General for Regional Development and met five times over several days. It commenced with an assessment of the current situation, worked on a new definition of missions, discussed international experiences that were made available thanks to a partnership with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Forum of Federations, and laid down its recommendations in a final document for the minister (*“Rapport du Processus de Réflexion sur le Repositionnement des SDR: Les Structures de Développement Régional – Etat des lieux et perspectives de réformes”*). This format of an inter-organizational working group had several positive effects: It made representatives of the partner structure work on the future of their own organization, ensuring ownership of findings and recommendations; it permitted communication between the ministry, development offices, and regional development directorates; and, above all, it was a space to reestablish orientation in a difficult transition period.

The sequence of activities was probably not optimal. From an organization development perspective, it would be normal practice to begin with the redefinition of roles and missions, followed by addressing organizational issues. The training modules should have then been developed based on the requirements of the different posts. However, GIZ had to first demonstrate that it could meet the request of the ministry, which was training for individuals. Once the partner was convinced on the usefulness of the chosen approach and GIZ’s capacity to implement it, the partner requested to work on roles and missions. With this experience, the ministry gradually agreed to follow the organizational development approach.

### *c) Policy-making for decentralization*

Again the initial request from the ministry was for training only. However, again, GIZ proposed an action-learning approach through a working group. An interministerial group was established comprising the Ministry of Development, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Finance and Equipment. The group was mandated to develop recommendations for the country’s decentralization policy from a regional development perspective. It addressed development planning, territorial reform, task

assignments and financing, citizen's participation, and restructuring of the ministry's deconcentrated structure. The working group was supported by an international expert and participated in a study trip to Germany to better understand regional development in a decentralized system. After several working sessions, the group produced a paper to describe the proposal of the Ministry of Development for the country's decentralization policy ("*Pistes d'orientation sur la décentralisation au service du développement régional. Synthèse des travaux d'un groupe de travail interministériel*"). The working group put an emphasis on the state's deconcentrated structure at the governorate level in order to make government action on regional development more coordinated and coherent.

A research project was conducted in order to improve understanding of the regional governance; the juxtaposition of the governors and their administrations; deconcentrated structures of national ministries and the regional council; planning practice; staffing; and the performance in development project management. It was conducted in 8 of the 24 governorates. The findings were discussed during a workshop hosted by the Ministry of Development, our project partner, and the Ministry of the Interior, lead manager in the field. The workshop concluded that line ministries would also have to be involved in decentralization issues since they should devolve responsibilities to local governments and strengthen their presence on the regional level with more consistent deconcentration. Another interministerial working group of 10 line ministries was therefore formed. It exchanged experiences on deconcentration. It mandated an international expert group to work on a charter of deconcentration and a new definition of the role of the governor.

This example reveals interesting implementation aspects:

- A constant and transparent dialogue with the strong Ministry of the Interior encouraged it to host a joint workshop with a rather weak Ministry of Development.
- This workshop started to open up the very closed Ministry of the Interior to other ministries.
- The ministries defined their needs for discussion and support together, thereby avoiding parallel and irrelevant studies or legal drafting.
- Based on the defined needs, an international expert group could advise on the rather delicate question of the state apparatus on the regional level and the future of the governor.

- German, Swiss, and Tunisian expertise facilitated the acceptance of the French expert, who was particularly interesting due to the common administrative legacy: France's reform process since 1983 and the country's outspoken practice on deconcentration.

### 3. Transforming Tunisia's Centre for Training and Support for Decentralization

With the mandate to train local authorities, CFAD should respond to the demands of municipalities. In the political turmoil of recent years, CFAD has not yet found its role in the transformation process and is currently facing a big challenge: to get closer to its local clients and to respond to the higher demands of cities, which want to be trained on conventional subjects, such as finance and IT, as well as on new themes deriving from the new constitution, such as local governance and public management.

To enable CFAD to improve its performance, qualifications, and responsiveness, it requested GIZ's support in adapting and decentralizing its training offers to meet the requirements of the municipalities.

The new constitution, adopted in January 2014, foresees a highly advanced, decentralized system and emphasizes that "local authorities shall adopt the mechanisms of participatory democracy and the principles of open governance to ensure broader participation of citizens and civil society . . ." Within this context, municipalities play a key role in the process of democratic transition and implementing the decentralization reform. The new legal framework offers a real opportunity to municipalities, but it is difficult for them to meet the new expectations and demands of citizens. Hence, the municipalities urgently need reorientation, awareness-raising, and tailor-made pragmatic tools. They must offer better municipal services, be open to participatory mechanisms, and implement new assigned competences focusing on self-governance.

The constitution requires further qualification measurements taking into account both new themes and new beneficiaries:

- It can be expected that a large number of civil servants at the national level will be transferred to the municipal level. At present, there are around 6,900 civil servants at the local level, compared with 570,000 at the national level. This will increase the need for training.

- The decentralization reform also needs to move along with deconcentration as the foundation for the new setup of local and regional structures. Again, information and training is required at both the local and national levels to better understand each role and support the reforms.
- Tunisia has recently created 86 municipalities. The new Ministry of Local Affairs has requested an emergency plan to train around four executives for each new municipality within six months.
- CFAD will also be a core trainer for around 7,000 municipal councilors and 300 regional councilors in the future. It will need to provide extended trainings to prepare the ground for local and regional elections in 2017.

CFAD is one of the key actors within the decentralization process. However, it currently lacks the information, personnel resources, institutional flexibility, and adaptiveness to satisfy this increased demand. CFAD has a yearly budget of roughly 900,000 Tunisian dinars (about €420,000) earmarked for operations. Although it therefore has the financial resources to undertake some reforms, a lack of staff capacities, centralism, and the absence of an internal strategy hinder change. Internal transformation and fruitful cooperation with other key national stakeholders will be needed to meet the current challenges of new and increased demands. CFAD needs to adapt its courses and internal organization to the new political context. The center also has to be open to making changes in the administrative and institutional cultures within its own structures to prepare for the upcoming tasks, foremost to accompany the local authorities in this transformation process. **To summarize, the center's implementation challenge is to develop mechanisms that will help with responding better to the existing challenges – but also to the new training requirements at the municipal, regional, and national levels – within this decentralized context, and to improve its outreach in the regions.**

To address the abovementioned challenges together, GIZ and CFAD developed their cooperation in different fields. The way the cooperation started illustrates a main approach in this partnership.

The first important entry point for change was to introduce new topics. When GIZ started working with the center in 2012, CFAD asked for awareness courses on “How to introduce participatory approaches” in order to cope with new municipal demands. Hence, the first step was to introduce these approaches to municipalities and anchor them in the annual curricula. This set the basis for the second step: to enlarge the

cooperation and tackle sensitive issues such as analyzing the trainer pool and revising internal strategies with the aim of bringing the center closer to its beneficiaries.

CFAD, with the support of GIZ, held several workshops from June 2013 to October 2014 across the whole country, reaching out to large, medium, and small cities. The meetings provided a platform for exchanges on the participatory approach, the constraints of municipalities, and the establishment of participatory mechanisms. These awareness workshops highlighted the need to train local experts in this area in order for them to become mediators in each region. Selected according to specific criteria, candidates came from regions all over Tunisia with extensive field experience and local knowledge. Some of these new trainers were involved in following awareness workshops, and their experiences enriched the debates. This training of trainers was the entry point for CFAD to discover the importance of trainer pools, thus setting the basis for our cooperation in this field. The training and awareness course was supported by a handbook (French/Arabic) on “Local governance and citizen participation in municipal action.” This manual was designed for CFAD trainers and was disseminated to all municipalities and civil society wishing to learn more about concepts, frameworks, and tools surrounding local citizen participation. In total, this course reached 225 municipalities (out of the former 264), and the handbook is still being used for follow-up courses on related themes, for example participatory investment plans.

Meanwhile, GIZ is supporting the center on three more aspects: strategy development to improve needs-identification and to respond to local demands, the reinforcement of the trainer pool, and the development of pilot modules. Tunisian experts provide technical advice, in tandem with Tunisian and European experts. They comprise GIZ experts; university professors from Tunisia, Germany, and other European countries; and external practitioners with long-term hands-on experience in the specific fields.

Regarding the first aspect, GIZ advised CFAD to focus on strategic development to regionalize the center and to introduce basic trainings, going beyond the conventional two to three days for advanced trainings. Taking into consideration the feedback of the regions and municipalities, the key questions for CFAD are how to better meet the expectations of the clients and how to bring the center closer to its beneficiaries in the field across Tunisia. CFAD, with the support of GIZ, conducted extended needs assessments in different regions and worked together on improving

demand-mechanisms, evaluations, the establishment of a professions catalog, and an overview of existing modules. Currently, two more joint studies are in process: one on the regionalization of CFAD, another on how to shift from ad hoc to long-term basic courses. The GIZ project is also fostering exchange formats between different national institutions and training providers (e.g., ENA and others) to overcome predominant competition among national institutions on new roles and mandates. CFAD has started to think about solution-oriented partnerships between key stakeholders to solve the high number of upcoming tasks and requested the support of universities for the ongoing studies.

The second component deals with reinforcing the CFAD trainer pool. It is based on an analysis of the existing trainer pool, which consists of about 150 temporary staff. Of the 150 trainers, only around 50 could be considered as the *core nucleus*, that is, regularly available for trainings, mostly of administration modules. The study highlighted a lack of thematic diversity as well as communication and pedagogical skills among the trainers. Based on this, CFAD, with the support of GIZ, set up a strategy to develop and reinforce the trainer pool to bind them closer and to train them via “training of trainers” sessions in the field of communication, the conception of modules, and pedagogical approaches. The goal is to set up a qualified and reliable trainer pool, a transparent evaluation system to reflect on the trainers’ performance, and to facilitate a prestigious certification process to be recognized by the public sector as a main actor in the career of the civil servants.

Thirdly, new training modules are developed and disseminated on topics that include strategic urban planning, archive structures, and communication and conflict management. A training course for general secretaries to become drivers of change when introducing municipal one-stop shops is now being offered. This is being done in close coordination with the GIZ Tunisia governance cluster.

In addition, GIZ supported the IT team of CFAD in the practical handling of “e-learning modules,” which is a relatively new approach for the training institute. The IT team also received support in facilitating access to e-courses in remote regions.

To conclude, through this collaboration, CFAD has become more receptive to the introduction of new training subjects. It recognized the tremendous need for capacity development at the local level, as well as the gratitude of the municipalities toward CFAD when responding to their needs.

This gave an enormous internal motivational boost, and the center is now approaching the necessary internal steps: the organizational development and regionalization of the center itself, hand in hand with the setup of a reliable and qualified trainer pool at the national and local levels. Consultations with key stakeholders on inter-Tunisian cooperation with other training institutes, such as ENA and universities, are in process. Staff members, including the Director-General himself, have participated in new pilot modules, thus discovering and experiencing modern participatory learning methodologies. We observed the beginning of an institutional cultural change by disseminating information, organizing regular team meetings, and realizing the importance of coordination with other national institutions to address the tasks together. So, CFAD is beginning to transform itself in order to better support local authorities with their necessary institutional and cultural changes toward a profound decentralization of the country.

#### 4. Municipalities acting for tomorrow: Bringing youth to the table

More than half of Tunisia's population is under 30 years old, and it was mainly the country's youth who went to the streets to protest against the Ben Ali regime in January 2011. Six years after the revolution, they impatiently await the political reforms and tangible changes in their living conditions. From their point of view, social inclusion and the demand for more democracy are interlinked, as both topics were at the core of the Arab Spring movement.

Youth unemployment – one of the triggers of the protest movement in 2011 – continued to increase and was at 33.2 percent in 2013 for those aged 15 to 29, with numbers being even higher among young women and among young people in urban areas (World Bank, 2014a). The newly gained political freedoms led to an increase in civil society organizations in some places. However, other, more deprived parts in the west and south of Tunisia remain partially excluded from this development. Although the constitution (see Art. 8, Art. 131) explicitly stipulates youth participation, the direct participation of youth in politics is low overall, despite their leading role in the revolution and their strong presence in the burgeoning civil society.

The expectations of the young and well-educated Tunisian population toward the state are high, whereas their lack of trust toward institutions

and political decision-makers remains unaltered. Moreover, the traditionally paternalist attitude toward young people as being those who “still need to learn” can make a fruitful dialogue complicated. This is particularly true for local politics. Young people are eager to shape their own futures and environments, and they can easily get frustrated when they feel that their concerns are not being taken into account.

The topic of citizen participation is increasingly attracting the attention of municipalities in post-revolutionary Tunisia under the pressure of the ongoing social uprisings. However, although the young people’s demands for social inclusion and democracy were well received by the majority of the population, it often remains unclear to local authorities how to respond. Youth policy has not been among their assigned tasks, so far. Viewing citizen participation as an asset to local politics – and seeing young citizens as a major target group in this context – is a new and unfamiliar idea for mayors and municipal employees. **The development challenge we are dealing with here is creating a common understanding of what a “youth-friendly city” could look like and how different stakeholders could contribute to a local youth policy.**

Within this context, GIZ supports its partner cities to involve youth in developing their local environments. **The implementation challenge is to successfully pilot concrete formats of youth participation on site and to induce a reflection process among the involved partners.**

As a starting point, partner cities were supported to conduct a stakeholder analysis on the topic of youth participation in 2012. Among the main findings were a lack of belief in the capacities of young people to develop and implement meaningful projects, a lack of dialogue between local stakeholders, and a lack of funding and infrastructure for youth participation. Therefore, GIZ supported the partner cities in offering achievable, tangible, and visible measures in order to make young people feel that local politics have opened up and that their ideas and commitments for change are welcome.

- Idea competition for youth initiatives:

The municipality launched a call for micro-projects and selected several of them in a transparent process. These selected projects were entirely led by young people, including budget responsibility, and involved other young people in a participative manner. Examples of winning ideas include blogging on civil society activities, election simulations, and internships at the municipality.



- Dialogue between mayor and young citizens:  
The mayor invited young people for dialogue and defined, together with them, which topics they wanted to tackle. Dialogue activities have taken place on youth-relevant topics on local radio, cultural activities have been created for the public space, and dialogues on environmental issues have been held, among other activities.

In order to facilitate practical exchanges, networking activities are offered in close cooperation with FNVT and CFAD. In this framework, stakeholders present their pilot projects on youth participation, capitalize on innovative approaches (e.g., by developing a guide on the idea competition for youth initiatives), and participate in study tours and training courses. The common training courses for municipal staff, youth center staff, non-governmental organization representatives, and young leaders aim at reinforcing capacities to set up local youth action plans. These are meant to be the beginning of a strategy on how to permanently and sustainably integrate young citizens into the process of building their local realities.

#### *How did we steer the implementation process?*

- A **multi-actor approach** has enabled stable cooperation with the partner cities. This is to prevent the risk of cooperation coming to an end due to changes in personnel at the partner level, and to integrate different stakeholders and different points of view. Local authorities suffer from a lack of resources and qualified staff, especially when it comes to new policy fields. Cooperation tends to depend on one person, who is already overburdened with other tasks.
- It has been a great advantage to work with **small-scale activities**, such as micro-projects and dialogue events on the local level. Typically, these are **low-cost measures**, which partners can easily put into place or replicate using their own scarce financial resources. Furthermore, small-scale activities lead to **quick and visible results**. Tunisian municipal councils are currently appointed and discharged for political reasons, and are therefore not able to engage in long-term planning. Additionally, young people are impatient to see tangible changes and might lose trust when these take time. Small hands-on measures, such as the idea competition for youth initiatives and the dialogue activities, respond to these requirements. Support measures with a longer time

frame, such as the preparation of the local youth action plan, need to plan longer-term practical implementation activities in order to keep everybody on board.

- It has been particularly important to identify **partners who are personally convinced** of the added value of youth participation **and committed to engaging in a dialogue that connects with young people**. As a consequence of the high degree of administrative centralization, local authorities are likely to understand their role as being an implementer of policies set at a higher level rather than as an actor for local change. Only in a longer relationship and with flexibility to support partners in a demand-driven approach could they **proactively promote their own ideas**.
- It has been crucial to start very **modest partnerships** on an activity or micro-project level and to accompany partners with clarifying roles and responsibilities. Due to sector thinking and “administrative habits,” local authorities have little experience with engaging in partnerships with other local actors. Municipalities, youth centers, and civil society organizations within one city are typically not used to cooperating with those from another.
- The different stakeholders involved need to **overcome mistrust** – and even envy – before they really **commit to an action plan** and feel **ownership** of their common project. From a short-term perspective, it has been extremely motivating for them to manage an activity or a project together and to experience the added value of collaboration with partners from different backgrounds. Over the long run, the cities noticed a considerable improvement in the levels of trust between young people and municipalities, as well as the practical networking and ownership of the youth involved.

### *Lessons from the case study*

Based on this description of four implementation processes in Tunisia – all aimed at putting the new constitution into practice – we conclude the following guiding principles for our work:

- **Trust allows for the identification of partners’ needs:** Following the revolution and its aftermath, Tunisia is being confronted with issues that were hitherto completely unknown, such as creating transparency,

citizens' participation, organizational development, and inter-agency cooperation. In this situation, partners can find it difficult to articulate their demands. They do not know what to ask for. Building trust and confidence is then essential to generate a discussion about needs and possible solutions, and this was the first step in all cases. Tunisia had never explicitly asked for a change academy, organizational development, a municipal youth policy, or for one-stop shops. Reacting positively and competently to the partners' requests for training set the stage for a deeper understanding of what partners needed and what international cooperation could deliver. It has been crucial to start very modest partnerships on an activity or micro-project level and to accompany partners with clarifying roles and responsibilities.

- **The ability to offer a long-term partnership** with key Tunisian partners proved to be an important element in building solid, trusting relationships, thus providing the conditions needed to tackle the “real” – often inner-institutional – challenges hindering reforms. Yet, a **long-term presence and commitment** were not only helpful for trust-building but also for other effects: They made it possible to pilot a new regional planning format that proved its feasibility and acceptance on the ground; the planning format gained the government's attention and was eventually replicated all over the country. A long-term presence also proves necessary when (cultural) changes take place gradually, as in the case of the municipal youth policy.
- **Action-training or training for change** makes real change more likely. Theoretical learning, in contrast, poses two transfer problems: Cognitively, participants do not learn to connect to real-world issues; and in organizational terms, the working environment can be hostile to knowledge application. This was the major insight, which drove the reorientation of the International Academy for Good Governance to an academy of change.
- **Change has to take place on the individual, organization, and system levels.** Only when qualified individuals, organizations that allow for change, and systems with well-placed organizations come together will capacity-development measures have a significant development impact. Working on these three levels has been possible with the Ministry of Development, as well as the training center, CFAD.
- **Participation was a main cooperation principle and proved to be essential for ownership, integration, and knowledge management:** Partners initially asked for studies and were not aware that their learn-

ing and decision-making cannot be substituted by external expertise. Multi-actor formats thus showed three advantages: Decisions remain with local actors, they bring about greater cooperation among the key players, and they use local knowledge. Examples from the case study include the Scientific Committee of the International Academy for Good Governance, the inter-agency working group on the future of Tunisia's development offices, the interministerial working group on deconcentration, the working group of training providers, and the municipal steering committees for one-stop shops.

- Finally, **cooperation with national and international expertise increases support quality and expands coverage**. The Academy for Leadership of Baden-Württemberg was useful as a living example of what an academy of change might look like; only by collaborating with UNDP could GIZ offer support to all governorates in regional planning; the OECD brought international experiences on regional development agencies; and, finally, a German training center shared with a Tunisian training center its experiences of training for decentralization.

## References

- Brockmeyer, A., Khatrouch, M., & Raballand, G. (2014). *Les systèmes de gestion des carrières et de la performance dans la fonction publique en Tunisie*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Ministry of the Interior. (2016). *Etude sur la fonction publique locale*. Tunis: Author.
- Union Tunisienne du service public et de la neutralité administrative. (2016). *Enquête – l'administration tunisienne au temps de la troika*. Retrieved from <http://fr.africame.com/tunisie/articles/enquete-ladministration-tunisienne-au-temps-de-la-troika-ile-demembrement>
- World Bank. (2014a). *Breaking the barriers to youth inclusion*. Retrieved from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia/publication/tunisia-breaking-the-barriers-to-youth-inclusion>
- World Bank. (2014b). *The unfinished revolution. Bringing opportunity, good jobs and greater wealth to all Tunisians*. Retrieved from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia/publication/unfinished-revolution>
- World Bank. (2015). *Note de d'orientation sur le financement des collectivités locales*. Retrieved from <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/549571467998495046/Tunisie-Note-dorientation-sur-le-financement-des-collectivites-locales>