

Moving the Needle

NO. 1 •



U.S. EMBASSY SUPPORTS ARTISANAL EXPORTS

Learn about the story of GDA
El Baraka.

30 UNDER 30

MEPI Alumni Selected to the
2020 Forbes Middle East 30
Under 30 List

TOMORROW'S LEADERS GRADUATE PROGRAM

We are now receiving
applications for admissions
in Fall term 2021-22.

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The U.S. Embassy's Assistance Unit (AU) provides programming that responds to the needs of the Government of Tunisia to accelerate economic development and strengthen its' democracy. The AU works in coordination with other U.S. government agencies as well as the international community to target distinct and defined elements of Tunisian economic and governance reforms. The AU manages projects funded through Economic Support Bilateral Funds, Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) local grants, and three MEPI leadership programs.



ANNOUNCEMENT



The U.S.- Department of State's US-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) announces the Tomorrow's Leaders Graduate Program (TLG) at American University of Beirut (AUB) and the Lebanese American University (LAU).

Tomorrow's Leaders Graduate program (TLG) is one of the many educational programs offered and fully funded by MEPI at the United States Department of State. It offers students from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) a unique opportunity to pursue a master's degree through leading American institutions with American-accreditation in the MENA region: the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the Lebanese American University (LAU). The deadline for application submission is March 2, 2021.



U.S. Embassy Supports Artisanal Exports

Mabrouka Athimni, president of the women cooperative GDA El Baraka, successfully obtained the ECOCERT Organic Group certification with the support of the Collaborative Action for Handicrafts Exports (ACEA) project.

The ECOCERT certification represents a major breakthrough that will allow GDA El Baraka to export their products by completing their first export deal with the French company Ethiquable.

The ACEA project works with Tunisian artisans, especially women in rural and underprivileged areas, to achieve sustainable economic growth and increase exports and employment.





Ambassador Blome Speaks at the Sfax Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Webinar

U.S. Ambassador Donald Blome joined the President of the Chamber of Commerce of Sfax, Ridha Fourati, the Director General, Ikram Makni, and a group of Sfaxian business owners during a webinar to discuss U.S. economic support and investment in Sfax and throughout Tunisia.

The U.S. Embassy in Tunis has a long-standing partnership with the Sfax Chamber of Commerce aimed at engaging the private sector and spurring economic growth in Sfax. This partnership translates into a variety of economic support projects that aim to increase local investment, strengthen small and medium-sized enterprises, and create local employment opportunities by increasing exports of Tunisian products locally and internationally.

A photograph of Ambassador Donald Blome, a man with glasses wearing a dark blue suit, white shirt, and patterned tie. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. In the foreground, several microphones are visible, including one with a red Tunisian flag logo and the word 'TUNISIA'. The background is slightly blurred, showing an American flag and some text on a wall.

**"THE U.S. HAS
PROVIDED
CLOSE TO \$2
BILLION IN
ASSISTANCE."**

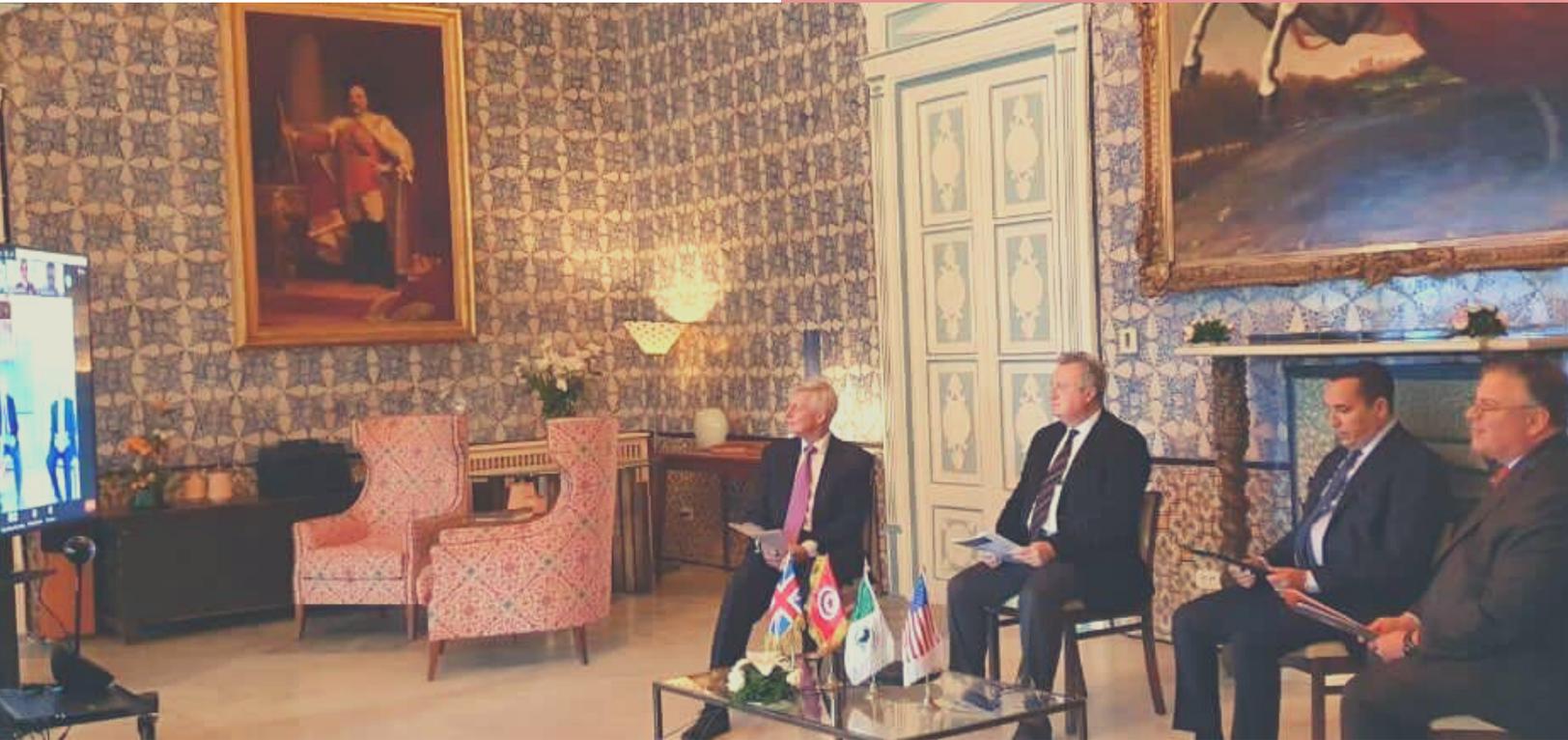
"Creating jobs and fostering private sector-led growth are priority areas for U.S. assistance in Tunisia. Since 2011, the United States has provided close to \$2 billion in foreign assistance to strengthen the country's economy and security, and support Tunisia's democracy."

- Ambassador Donald Blome



WE RECOGNIZE THAT AN INCLUSIVE
WORKFORCE IS ESSENTIAL FOR TUNISIA
TO THRIVE.”

AMBASSADOR BLOME



Souk At-Tanmia Initiative Supports More Than 80 Entrepreneurs Through Its' COVID-19 Support System

On December 2nd, U.S Ambassador Donald Blome joined British Ambassador Edward Oakden, Minister of the Economy, Finance and Investment Promotion Ali Kooli and African Development Bank (AfDB) Director-General of North Africa, Muhammad Al-Azizi, in an award ceremony. The event was part of AfDB's Souk At-Tanmia project to celebrate more than 80 entrepreneurs who won competitions to develop new technologies or adapt their business to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 12 entrepreneurs who developed the most innovative responses to COVID-19 won the "Africa vs Virus" competition and will receive grants between \$10,000 and \$25,000 and a technical mentorship to accelerate the implementation of their pilot projects. The U.S. Embassy recognizes that youth entrepreneurship is a key driver to boost Tunisia's economy and has invested more than \$7 million to support several projects for young entrepreneurs, including the AfDB's Souk At-Tanmia project.



THE U.S SUPPORTS THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TRAINING CENTER FOR FEED MANUFACTURING

U.S. Ambassador, Donald Blome, and the Minister of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries, Akissa Bahri, joined members of the Tunisian National Institute for Agronomy (INAT) and the U.S. Grains Council (USGC), on October 22nd in Tunis to mark the successful completion of the “Tunisian Training Center for Feed Manufacturing” project. The USGC-INAT Training Center is working to improve feed manufacturing across Tunisia and serves as a regional hub for feed manufacturing training in Africa and the Middle East. The USGC-INAT project focused on training nutritionists, feed millers, and producers of poultry, dairy, beef, and aquaculture through programs that improved overall feed manufacturing. More than 200 Tunisian students and professionals received training in both Tunisia and in the United States on improving livestock feed production and utilizing more modern and efficient techniques. The training center will also serve as a model training facility for modernizing the feed and livestock industry throughout Tunisia.



“MODERNIZING AND STREAMLINING THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR WILL PLAY A KEY ROLE IN JUMPSTARTING TUNISIA’S ECONOMY BY INCREASING THE NUMBER AND RANGE OF HIGH-QUALITY TUNISIAN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN THE MARKETPLACE.”
-AMBASSADOR BLOME



U.S. Embassy Tunis

NEWS IN BRIEF



NEW CIVIL SOCIETY ONLINE PLATFORM

As part of the U.S. Embassy’s \$5.6 million “Increasing Accountability in Tunisia” project in partnership with the National Center for States Courts (NCSC), the Ministry of Relations with Civil Society and the NCSC signed an agreement on December 15 to establish an electronic platform for civil society organizations (CSOs). This platform will help modernize CSO registration and reporting, fostering greater efficiency and accountability.



THREE TUNISIAN START-UPS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE THE ENDEAVOR SCALE-UP PROGRAM

Within the framework of the Promise project, Endeavor’s Scale-up program was launched on March 19 to support emerging Tunisian entrepreneurs. The program offered a combination of group and individual sessions to help entrepreneurs clarify their vision and strategy and strengthen their fundraising capabilities. During the five-month program, the entrepreneurs benefited from 46 hours of one-on-one mentoring and 60 hours of coaching focused on fundraising. The three business founders who went through the end of the program are Ameni Mansouri (Dabchy), Anis Kallel (Kaoun), and Malik Nouira (Prefabulous). The three entrepreneurs will also get the opportunity to observe an Endeavor international selection panel for additional international exposure.



NEWS IN BRIEF



TAPP DEVELOPS AN ONLINE PLATFORM TO LINK MUNICIPALITIES, MPS, AND CIVIL SOCIETY

In December 2020, the Tunisian Accountability and Political Participation project built an online platform that links members of Parliament with municipalities and civil society organizations. The platform is part of a greater effort to increase accountability in local governance.



ACEA ARTISANS MAKE FIRST ONLINE SALES WITH IMPROVED PACKAGING

In March 2020, ACEA artisans were eagerly anticipating the opportunity to participate in the Handicraft Production Fair (Salon de la Création Artisanale). They were prepared to sell a wide range of Wiki Pam products featuring newly designed packaging. Additionally, due to the training and coaching provided by ACEA, the artisans acquired the necessary set of business skills to sell their products at the fair. Some of the artisans just became eligible to participate for the first time, as holders of official Artisanal Cards gained through the ACEA project, in partnership with the Tunisian Agency for Professional Training (ATFP). Unfortunately, the global pandemic hit, and the event was canceled. The cancellation represented a major setback for the project and the artisans who have been working relentlessly to prepare for the event. In response, the U.S. Embassy and ACEA decided to help the artisans sell their products on the only market available during the lockdown: online sales. ACEA partnered with e-commerce platforms Founa.com and Jumia to exhibit the products of the artisans. As a result of this strategic pivot, these rural artisans made new sales to generate needed revenue, and created an online brand that features a range of attractive new products. The first purchases were made a few minutes after the launch of the products on the Founa platform.



NEWS IN BRIEF



ACEA LAUNCHES A NEW OLIVE WOOD CLUSTER

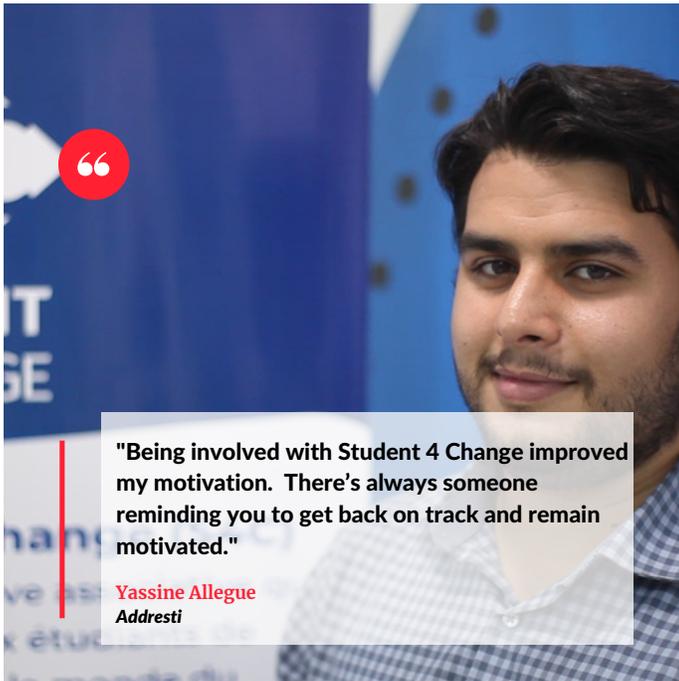
A new component of the ACEA project began with the launch of the new Sfax-Sidi Bouzid Olive Wood Cluster. The clustering approach aims to support the olive wood value chain in the two regions and strengthen artisans' capacity. The project will also help the artisans achieve excellence in product quality, design and marketing, which will allow them to increase their income by accessing new local and international markets.





MEET THE STUDENT 4 CHANGE GRADUATES

The Student 4 Change (S4C) project promotes the entrepreneurial culture in Tunisia and increases opportunities for entrepreneurs, young people and mainly students to create their own business in six different governorates along the Tunisian center (Monastir, Mahdia, Sousse, Kairouan, Kasserine and Sidi Bouzid). S4C aims to assist the participants to launch their businesses through an accelerated training cycle that strengthens their entrepreneurial skills. In October 2020, 15 students completed the program successfully and became business owners and entrepreneurial influencers in their local communities.



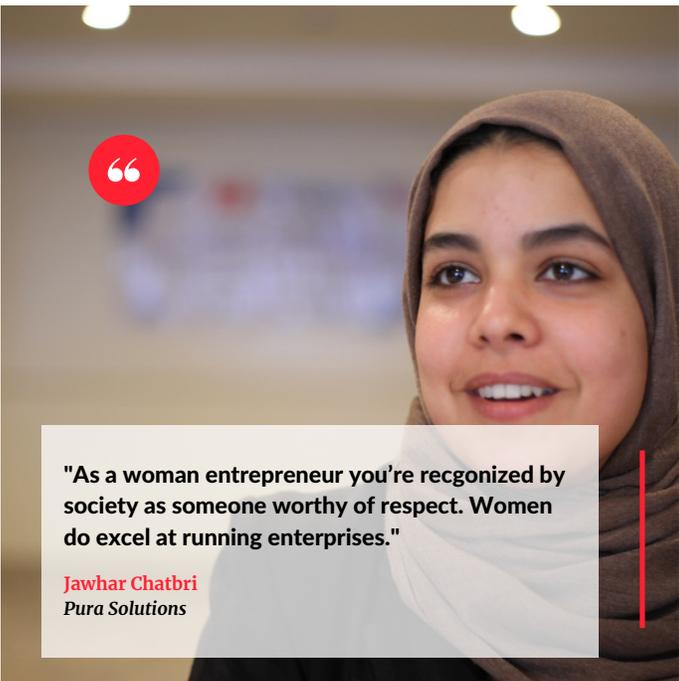
"Being involved with Student 4 Change improved my motivation. There's always someone reminding you to get back on track and remain motivated."

Yassine Allegue
Addresti



"Hanging out at coffee shops wasting time is not the same thing as hanging around the Student 4Change folks, where you hear a lot of people, each of them is willing to work and go the extra mile. This makes a huge difference"

Montassar Sassi
Poterie Innovant



"As a woman entrepreneur you're recognized by society as someone worthy of respect. Women do excel at running enterprises."

Jawhar Chatbri
Pura Solutions



"I joined you, and it was like you uncovered a part of me that I wasn't aware it existed. Despite not having a job, I now get up in the morning and start searching. Even when I don't achieve much on certain days, I know that I have made some progress."

Housseem Maktouf
MAK_Machine



30 UNDER 30



The 2016 MEPI Student Leaders alumnus and entrepreneur, Mohamed Dhaouafi, was selected to the 2020 Forbes Middle East 30 Under 30 List. Dhaouafi is the founder and CEO of CURE BIONICS, which develops and manufactures bionic hands and arms for people with disabilities. Its prosthetic limbs are 3D-printed using an ecological raw material. They have an adjustable socket, a rotating wrist for more flexibility and freedom, and a wireless solar charger for users in countries with instable or absent electricity coverage. Controlled by muscle signals, the bionic limbs don't require any surgical intervention to connect them with the body—they are wearable like a glove. In October 2018, Mohamed was received by the former president Beji Caied Essebsi as one of the inspiring Tunisian young entrepreneurs

MEPI ALUMNA CREATES CAMPAIGNS PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Salaam Halila, Tunisian MEPI Tomorrow's Leaders Alumna from Lebanese American University (LAU), excelled as a communication major during the program and used the skills she acquired to create two successful awareness campaigns surrounding mental health and promoting cultural differences in Arab society. Halila launched "Bil Hawa Sawa," (We are all in the same boat) a campaign to raise awareness about mental health among LAU students and remind them about the counseling services that LAU offers. The campaign gained wide acceptance across campus and beyond. Salaam also launched a second campaign: "We are more than Stereotypes." The main objective of the campaign was to break stereotypes prevalent in Arab society about each other and encourage the celebration of cultural differences.





U.S. Embassy Tunis

