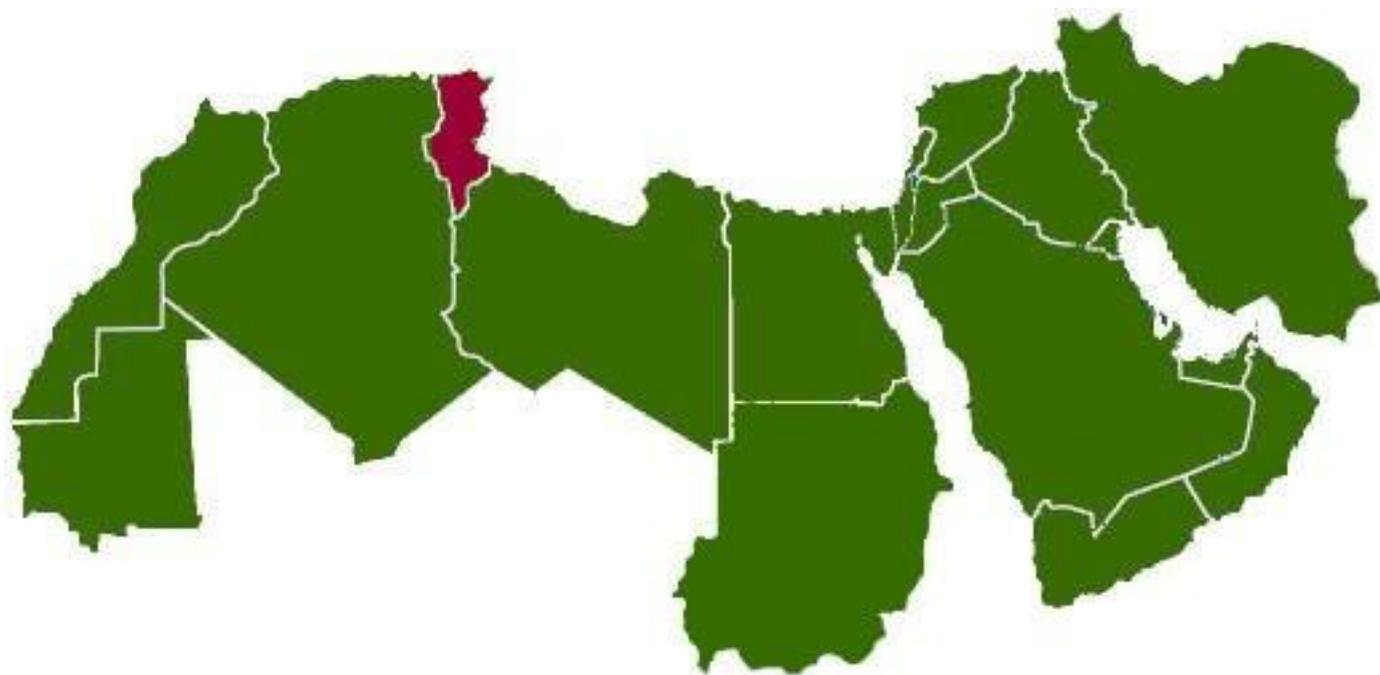


# Social Protection and Safety Nets in Tunisia

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This report is one output from a regional study of social protection and safety nets in the Middle East and North Africa, commissioned by the World Food Programme (WFP) from the Centre for Social Protection at IDS.

The project includes an overview research report (see: <http://www.ids.ac.uk/publication/social-protection-and-safety-nets-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa>) and nine country reports: Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia, Yemen.

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## ACRONYMS

CSP	Centre for Social Protection
DFID	Department for International Development
EU	European Union
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHO	Global Health Observatory
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDPs	Internally Displaced People
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IR	Islamic Relief Worldwide
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PIU	project implementation unit
PRRO	Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation
SP	Social Protection
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SSN	Social Safety Net
TND	Tunisian dinars
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WFP OMC	World Food Programme's Cairo Regional Bureau
WHO	World Health Organisation

## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

This report is part of a larger scoping study on social protection programmes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region commissioned by the World Food Programme's Cairo Regional Bureau (WFP OMC) from the Centre for Social Protection (CSP) at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). Conceptualised within a comprehensive and context-responsive social protection framework, it includes food and nutrition security as well as refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs). The broader scoping study is a combination of in-depth country case studies conducted by locally based consultants and a number of country case studies conducted via desktop review. As a collaborative effort between the WFP OMC and the CSP, this scoping study is intended to contribute to the development of WFP's regional social protection strategy. This report on Tunisia has been conducted via desktop review.

### **1.1. Objectives**

This review provides an overview of policies, programmes and strategies to address poverty and vulnerability in Tunisia, through both governmental and non-governmental organisations. Since the uprisings in December 2010 which led to the subsequent overthrow of President Ben Ali in 2011, the political landscape has been polarised. While Tunisia has experienced a relatively successful political transition, the degree to which social conditions, policy and practice will be transformed to address the root issues of inequality has been overshadowed by the struggle to consolidate political power.

In light of the political events of the last four years in Tunisia, this review has been written with the intention to convey, to the best ability possible, a current assessment of poverty and vulnerability in Tunisia, and the measures being taken to provide forms of social protection. The most current data is used wherever possible, but in many cases it has not been updated since before the events of 2011.

As Tunisia entered a transition to democracy in 2011, civil conflict erupted in neighbouring Libya with the ousting of Prime Minister (Colonel) Gaddafi. The harsh military reprisals to civil protests caused an influx of close to 1 million Libyan refugees, Tunisian workers and third country nationals into southern Tunisia. Although the majority were either relocated to their home countries, relocated onward, or eventually returned to Libya, the refugee situation added pressures to governance, resources and stability in the interim governance and transition period. The ongoing conflict in Libya continues to impact the economic stability and security of Tunisia and must be taken into account in any analysis and recommendations for national social protection strategies. This review therefore explores social protection efforts for displaced people, refugees and host communities.

The review also examines social protection in Tunisia from a perspective of food security and nutrition outcomes, as well as the importance of informal safety nets and social protection practices.

### **1.2. Methodology**

This desktop review was conducted remotely and included searching, reviewing and synthesising literature, policy and practice documents. It drew on academic and grey literature, as well as website and document review of government and non-government agencies active in areas related to social protection. Documents were located via purposive searching of Google and Google Scholar search engines, selected organisational websites of humanitarian and social development agencies working in the field, and subsequent snowball searching of these documents and websites.

This study is limited by two related factors: time constraints and the changing political landscape. The political landscape in Tunisia has been in a state of change since the fall of the Ben Ali regime in 2011, although comparatively to other countries in the region, the democratic transition has been relatively smooth. As this report was being researched and written, Tunisia was preparing for and conducting its first democratic election on 21 December 2014, in which Nidaa Tounes candidate Beji Caid Essebsi defeated outgoing president Moncef Marzouki in run-off elections.

At the time of writing, it remains to be seen how the election outcome will impact the direction of policy and programmes related to social protection, food and nutrition security in the near future.

### **1.3. Report structure**

This report is organised into seven chapters, as follows.

**Chapter 1: Introduction**, presents the study objectives, overview and methodology.

**Chapter 2: National context** provides a brief overview of Tunisia's history, economy, demographics, and political life.

**Chapter 3: Social protection policies and institutions**, introduces the major policies and strategies related to social protection, as well as institutional arrangements that have been put into place for the implementation of social protection policies and strategies.

**Chapter 4: Social protection programmes and safety nets** provides an overview of existing social protection interventions in Tunisia.

**Chapter 5: Informal and semi-formal safety nets** discusses the role played by non-formal actors in delivering social protection in Tunisia.

**Chapter 6: Programmes targeting refugees and displaced people**, outlines initiatives responding to the needs of refugees and internally displaced people in Tunisia. Since 2011, Tunisia has received an extremely high influx of refugees out of Libya, many of whom were migrant workers displaced in the civil conflict following the disposal of Gaddafi the ongoing struggle for governing power.

**Chapter 7: Conclusion**, summarises the findings of the study, analyses policy gaps, and recommends approaches and steps that can contribute positively to addressing poverty, vulnerability and food security in Tunisia.

## **Chapter 2. National context**

### **2.1. Recent political history**

Tunisia gained independence in 1957, and held its first multi-party parliamentary elections in 1981, electing President Bourguiba's party. In 1987, a bloodless palace coup ousted Bourguiba, instating Ben Ali as President. He went on to win four elections between 1989 and 2009. Since December 2010, Tunisia has undergone a popular revolution and has been in transition to democratic governance ever since. Tunisia's revolution led the regional 'Arab Spring' in 2011. A brief timeline sketches key events of the last few years.

In December 2010, national anti-government demonstrations broke out in Tunisia, fuelled by high unemployment rates, food inflation, corruption and political restrictions, among other grievances. In January 2011 President Ben Ali went into exile and an interim national unity government was announced by Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi, who subsequently resigned in February 2011 in response to public demand. In April 2011, Libyan troops crossed the border into Tunisia during clashes with rebels. Thousands of Tunisians fled by boat to the Italian island of Lampedusa.

The years since the 2011 revolution can be characterised as a struggle for political legitimacy and governance between the secular 'old guard' and the new Ennahda Islamist party. Parliamentary elections were held in October 2011, with a minority win by Ennahda. In December 2011 human rights activist Moncef Marzouki was elected president by the constituent assembly, and Ennahda leader Hamadi Jebali was sworn in as prime minister.

The next summer, in August 2012, Tunisians took to the streets to protest moves by the Islamist-led government to reduce women's rights. A draft of the new constitution referred to women as "complementary to men", whereas the 1956 constitution granted women full equality with men.

Prime Minister Jebali resigned in February 2013, after his ruling Islamist Ennahda party rejected his proposals to form a government of technocrats following the killing of an opposition anti-Islamist leader. Ennahda rejects opposition allegations that it was behind the killing of Chokri Belaid, whose death prompted violent protests. After much political conflict and contestation, in October 2013 the governing Islamist party, Ennahda, agreed to hand over power to a caretaker government of independent figures tasked with organising fresh elections in 2014.

After a prolonged process of deliberation whilst these political changes took place, the Tunisian constituent assembly adopted a new constitution on 26 January 2014. The breakthrough from the deadlock is credited to a compromise brokered by Tunisian trade unions between the country's Islamists (primarily Ennahda party members) and secularists. Key provisions in the original draft constitution, when Ennahda was in power, such as the role of religion and women's rights, were amended from their original proposals. This resulted in an overwhelming majority approving the constitution. Social protection and the right to health were also included in the constitution. Tunisia's emergence from the democratic transition process with a constitution reflecting a broad consensus demonstrates good potential for the future stability in the country (Grote 2014).

A second parliamentary election since 2011 was held in October 2014. Nidaa Tounes, which unites secularists, trade unionists, liberals and some players from the Ben Ali era, won the largest bloc of

seats, overtaking the Islamist Ennahda. On 21 December 2014, Nidaa Tounes candidate Beji Caid Essebsi defeated outgoing president Moncef Marzouki in run-off elections (BBC 2014).

Although these events demonstrate the opening up of political space, in that a government no longer supported by the public was replaced peacefully, building a free and open democratic culture will take time. The legitimacy and impact of any government in power will be challenged by the impacts of the regional economic and security challenges, particularly in Libya and Syria. The regional instability and precarious domestic environment contribute to fragile economic growth and continued high unemployment rates since the 2011 revolution. As Tunisia shares a 490km long border with Libya, it is foreseen that the ongoing conflict here will continue to affect Tunisian economic, and thus potentially political, stability (ECHO 2014).

## **2.2. Economy and poverty**

Tunisia has a diverse economy, including well developed agricultural capabilities, natural resources that include petroleum, minerals (iron, lead, zinc) as well as arable land, a well-developed tourism sector, strong trade links with the EU and strategic geographic proximity to key shipping routes.

According to the World Bank (2014), GDP in 2013 was US\$ 47 billion, with a gross national income (GNI) per capita of US\$ 4,200. Tunisia is categorised as an upper middle-income country, with 15.5% of the population living at or below national poverty lines, 1% living below US\$ 1.25/day and 4% living on less than US\$ 2/day. Tunisia has a Gini index of 36, a measure used to assess income inequality (where 0 = perfect equality, 100 = perfect inequality), which ranks Tunisia at 81 out of 190 countries with comparable data.

The country's Human Development Index rose by 1.5% annually between 1980 and 2010, from 0.436 to 0.683 in 2014. Compared to other Arab states, which lay at an average of 0.590, Tunisia is above the regional average. Despite this, high unemployment rates and poor living conditions are among the most prominent issues faced by the country (WFP 2014).

## **2.3. Demographics**

The population of Tunisia stood at 11 million in 2014. The median age was 29.8 years and 23.2% of Tunisians are under 15 years old. Although two-thirds (67%) of the population now lives in urban areas, one in three Tunisians (33%) still reside in rural areas. Literacy rates are fairly high, at 79%, although this does imply that one in five citizens (21%) still cannot read or write (World Bank 2014).

Life expectancy at birth in 2012 was estimated at 78 for females and 74 for males. The under-five mortality rate (U5MR) stands at 16 deaths per 1,000 live births, and the maternal mortality rate (MMR) is estimated at 46 per 100,000 live births. The government allocates 7% of GDP to expenditure on health.

## **2.4. Malnutrition**

Malnutrition in Tunisia takes all three forms: under-nutrition, 'over-nutrition' and micronutrient deficiencies (Table 1). Levels of child undernutrition are not seriously high – stunting at 10%, wasting at 3% - but more than half of all adults are overweight (56%), and one in four adults is obese (24%). Also, more than one woman in four suffers from anaemia (28%), which is an iron deficiency disorder.

**Table 1. Malnutrition indicators in Tunisia, 2012**

<b>Children under five</b>	<b>Prevalence</b>	<b>Adults</b>	<b>Prevalence</b>
Stunting	10%	Overweight (BMI > 25)	56%
Wasting	3%	Obesity (BMI > 30)	24%
Severe wasting	2%	Women with anaemia	28%
Overweight	14%		
Low birth-weight	7%		

Sources: WHO 2014: [www.who.int/countries/tun/en/](http://www.who.int/countries/tun/en/), IFPRI 2014: [www.globalnutritionreport.org](http://www.globalnutritionreport.org)

## Chapter 3. Social protection policies and institutions

### 3.1. Government policies and strategies

Tunisia has a well-developed rights-based social protection system. It is based on a contribution system linked to healthcare provision, cash transfers and other benefits gained through employment. The system also encompasses national health and education provision (HelpAge 2008). Prior to the revolution in 2011, the Tunisian social protection and security systems were already regarded as one of the most complete and thorough approaches in the Maghreb and Arab regions. Social security provision has been a national priority since it was first adopted in the 1960s in economic and social development plans. In the years since 2011, although there has been policy debate and discussion about reforms and redirection to social protection programming, the main focus of public politics has been on transitioning to a system of democratic governance. Aside from adjusting to the recent changes in government and the impact of the ongoing conflict in neighbouring Libya, current budgetary constraints and demographic changes also pose significant challenges to the sustainability of the social protection system. As such, the debates following the revolution have been characterised by questions of reform and sustainability, while maintaining the system's positive elements (Braham and Dia 2014).

In January 2013, the Tunisian government signed a key social stability pact, coinciding with the two-year anniversary of the start of the Arab Spring. In signing the document, the government and its social partners demonstrated their commitment to social justice, freedom of association, social dialogue and decent work, goals held by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Representatives from the ILO suggest that the signing of this agreement was the beginning of a multi-faceted process that will hopefully pave the way for improvements in areas such as labour legislation and industrial relations, employment policies, vocational training and education, social protection, as well as balanced regional development (ILO 2013).

In brief, the Tunisian social protection system is essentially state-run and is composed of two pillars. The first pillar is contributory and comprises three schemes:

- **CNRPS (National Pension and Social Insurance Fund)**, for the public sector, covering old age, invalidity, death, and family benefits;
- **CNSS (National Social Security Fund)**, for the private sector, also covering old age, invalidity, death, and family benefits;
- **CNAM (National Health Insurance Fund)** covers for its part sickness, accident and occupational disease for both public and private sector contributors.

The administrative boards of these funds are formed on a tripartite basis (state, employers and employees). Limited private sector intervention, such as insurance companies and mutual benefit organisations, takes the form of complementary and optional management of health care coverage (ILO 2012).

The second pillar is a non-contributory system based on a direct transfer scheme, namely:

- the PNAFN (Assistance Programme for needy families, elderly and disabled), and also

- a health access programme providing access to public medical institutions, either free of charge or at a reduced rate (Braham and Dia 2014).

These statutory social security schemes cover the majority of the working population in employment. For those not covered by any social security schemes, social development and assistance programmes exist, including aid programmes for needy families, programmes targeting the elderly and disabled, allowances to families taking in an elderly person, and free medical assistance (ILO 2012).

According to the ILO, the most recent update of health coverage statistics found that more than 80% of the Tunisian population had health coverage in 2006, either through social health insurance or a public medical assistance programme (ILO 2012). Although this data is several years old, this is a particularly high percentage for a middle-income country such as Tunisia. It would be useful to obtain information on the coverage of the current population of Tunisia, with the added impact of refugees in the country. It is not clear how the influx of Libyan refugees, particularly in 2011, has impacted the availability of government resources to deliver health services.

In 2012, the population not yet covered by social security legislation include casual and seasonal agricultural workers, workers on development sites, domestic employees, home-helpers, religious officials and the unemployed. To address this coverage gap, measures have been taken with varying success, including: inspection and compulsory affiliation procedures; free medical assistance subject to verification that the applicant was not insured under a social security scheme; and schemes being adapted to the needs of injured persons (ILO 2012). It remains to be seen how the political events of the last few years, including: the adoption of a new constitution; the Tunis declaration on Social Justice in the Arab region; and the election of a majority parliament and president backed by the Nidaa Tounes party; will affect future government social protection programming and provision services such as healthcare services.

In addition to the new constitution and elections mentioned above, in 2014 Tunisia also saw other notable policy debates and developments. On 11-12 September 2014, the Ministry of Social Affairs hosted a 'National Conference on Social Protection', in partnership with the International Labour Office, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and in collaboration with the Centre for Economic and Social Researches and Studies (CERES). The Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) and the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA) also took part in the conference. It was stressed that, "the reform of the social protection system depends on the existence of a comprehensive development system based on economic cohesion, promotion of employment, stable social climate and achievement of positive growth rate" (TAP 2014). The conference was intended to help deepen discussion on reform of social protection in Tunisia in light of the new constitution and social pact. Following the conference, it was stated that a government strategy document would be underway for the period 2015-2025, aimed at "establishing a prospective vision of the development policy that includes structural reforms and programmes and major projects needed to implement this policy to prepare the ground to the next government" (TAP 2014).

On 17-18 September 2014, Tunisia hosted the 28<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) entitled 'Challenges and Opportunities of Social Justice in the Arab Region'. An outcome of this session was the 'Tunis Declaration on Social Justice in the Arab Region', to which Tunisia is a signatory. The declaration is composed of a list of commitments including: social justice, equality, equity, inclusive development, rights of youth and older people, youth economic and social empowerment, participatory development and implementation of social protection policies, the right to health and education and most notably, a commitment to developing

strategies to “expand social protection, without exclusion or marginalisation to address the requirements of different population groups” (ESCWA 2014a).

The session also saw the signing of a technical cooperation framework entitled ‘Towards inclusive economic development in Tunisia’ between ESCWA and the Government of Tunisia. This framework sets out an investment roadmap for Tunisia, focusing on less developed regions and the preparation of a study on ‘Growth and Employment in Tunisia’, that includes economic policy recommendations to assist Tunisia in the transitional period. It also aims to support the Tunisian Government in the development of an upcoming Economic and Social Development Plan, with particular emphasis on building management and analytical capacity for decentralised planning; using computable general equilibrium (CGE) models and quantitative tools in planning; establishing monitoring and evaluation tools as well as indicators for measuring progress in reaching development targets (ESCWA 2014).

Although the social protection and security system in Tunisia is well developed, there are a number of factors that could shape future governmental and non-governmental systems. These include, but are not limited to: the social and political impacts of the 2011 revolution; the subsequent multiple elections and changes in government; the ongoing conflict in neighbouring Libya; and the impact of these events and the European economy on the stabilisation and growth of the Tunisian economy. From the above-mentioned policy meetings it appears that the process of developing a national social protection policy or strategy is underway, and any future social protection programming and planning will need to take the policy or strategy into account when it becomes finalised.

## **3.2. Non-government actors**

Various actors and stakeholders are involved in the provision of social protection in Tunisia, including a number of civil society and non-governmental organisations. It is difficult to compile a comprehensive list of all NGOs and civil society organisations operating in Tunisia, but from a strategic policy perspective, the following organisations have been identified.

At a systems strengthening level, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Bank are collaborating with the Tunisian government.

### **3.2.1. UNDP Strategy for UN System work in Tunisia**

The UNDP strategy for UN System work in Tunisia focuses on three priorities: (i) democratic governance; (ii) inclusive economic model, sustainable and resilient; (iii) social protection and equitable access to quality social services. UNDP aims to support Tunisia in its democratic transition and in building a model of sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The UNDP strategy has a total budget estimated at US\$ 63,910,000 and will have impact through developing partnerships and extensive collaboration strategies on the basis of common development priorities. Most interventions will be implemented through national government agencies, under the overall coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government Coordinating Agency (UNDP 2014). The two main components of the UNDP’s engagement in Tunisia are:

#### ***Component 1: Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Human Development***

- Support to strategic functions of planning, deepening the knowledge of the phenomena of poverty and vulnerability
- Poverty reduction as part of local projects participatory development and support for income generation

- Preservation of natural resources and biodiversity and support energy transition.

### **Component 2: Consolidation of Democratic Governance Reforms**

- Strengthening the rule of law, citizen participation and accountability mechanisms
- Reform of public administration, decentralisation, local governance and promotion of transparency and integrity (UNDP 2014).

Within a cooperative initiative between the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the European Union (EU), Tunisia has carried out healthcare sector reform. Focal areas include: sector improvements; reinforcement of the capacities of primary care, especially in disadvantaged areas; and taking charge of non-transmissible diseases connected to demographic transition (Gusenbaur 2013). In addition, a European Union (EU) project was signed in October 2012 for an amount of 12 million euro that aims to reduce regional inequalities in primary healthcare access in 13 disadvantaged regions. The EU also supported complementary initiatives in 2012, with the aim of creating a National Agency for the Certification and Accreditation of Healthcare Services (Gusenbaur 2013).

### **3.2.2. World Bank Social Protection Reforms Support Project**

On 5 November 2013, a grant was signed by the World Bank and the Government of Tunisia for a project to support inclusive growth and poverty reduction efforts in Tunisia. This 'Tunisia Social Protection Reforms Support' grant was in the amount of USD 4.7 million and is intended to strengthen institutional capacity to design social protection reforms and improve the targeting of safety net programmes.

According to the World Bank, although Tunisia spent close to 60% of its public budget on social spending as of 2013, the social transfer and security system is poorly targeted and unsustainable. The existing social transfer system is focused on large expenditures on food and fuel subsidies, which largely benefit richer households. Cash transfers, labour and housing programmes, which would be of most use to the poorest households, could be targeted in a more focused way (World Bank 2013).

The social protection reforms project has three components.

- 1) **Subsidy and safety net reform support;** its sub-components are:
  - (i) Technical assistance to inter-ministerial working group;
  - (ii) Development of a unified database and targeting system; and
  - (iii) Consensus-building and communication.
- 2) **Strengthening social security analysis and planning** to support building institutional capacity to analyse and develop consensus on an integrated reform plan for pensions and health insurance.
- 3) **Project management and monitoring** to support the project implementation unit (PIU) in managing the project and monitoring project-related activities and outcomes (World Bank 2013).

### **3.2.3. Humanitarian assistance and social protection services for refugees**

Humanitarian assistance and social protection services for refugees will be outlined in greater detail below, but since this is a pressing need in Tunisia the primary agencies coordinating with the Tunisian Government to ensure service provision are listed here.

The **United Nations High Commission for Refugees** (UNHCR) plays a key role in the coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance and social protection services for refugees in Tunisia, the population of which has been impacted greatly by the conflict in Libya since 2011. UNHCR collaborates closely with the Tunisian Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs, Social Affairs, Women Affairs, Justice and Human Rights and Employment. Its implementing partners include the Tunisian Red Crescent and Islamic Relief Worldwide. UNHCR cooperates with the Arab Institute for Human Rights (IADH), the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and France Terre d'Asile (FTDA) (UNHCR 2014).

The **United Nations Country Team** in Tunisia, of which UNHCR is a member, plays an active role in the Transition Strategy for Tunisia 2011-2014 and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2015-2019 (UNHCR 2014).

The **UN thematic Emergency group**, co-chaired by the UNHCR, leads the inter-agency emergency preparedness efforts in case of an influx of refugees and asylum seekers from Libya (UNHCR 2014).

The **UN World Food Programme** provides support to the government's school feeding programme (see section 4.6 below), and runs a cash-for-assets project with FAO that promotes rural livelihoods.

The **International Committee of the Red Cross** operates in Tunisia, visiting detainees, dealing with the consequences of the Western Sahara conflict, restoring contact between separated families and promoting international humanitarian law (ICRC 2014).

## **Chapter 4. Social protection programmes and safety nets**

Tunisia's public expenditure on social protection as a percentage of GDP was 10.4% in 2011, slightly higher than the regional average of 9.0% for North Africa. When excluding the portion of these funds directed to public healthcare, which amounts to 1.5% of GDP, public expenditure for social protection becomes 8.9% of GDP in 2011 (ILO 2014).

Within the Tunisian ministries of government, there are eight policy branches with at least one programme in social protection. The ILO classifies this as 'comprehensive scope of legal coverage'. Programmes are anchored in national legislation in the following contingencies: employment injury, maternity, old age, sickness, invalidity, survivors and family allowances. The proportion of the unemployed who receive benefits was 3% in 2008 (ILO 2014).

### **4.1. Employment injury**

Employment injury is covered through social insurance. Neither the government nor individual employees contribute to this fund, instead it is covered by employers, who contribute 0.4-4% of gross payroll based on the assessed degree of risk. Self-employed persons are covered through voluntary contributions. As a percentage of the labour force, the estimated legal employment injury coverage is 42% for those covered via mandatory employer contributions and 15% covered through the voluntary scheme.

### **4.2. Maternity benefits**

Maternity benefits were first introduced in 1960 and are provided as a type of social insurance through a national social security fund that is financed from employers, employees and self-employed. The standard period of maternity leave is one month, with civil servants entitled to take two months. Women covered through most positions in the Labour Code receive two-thirds (66.7%) of their average daily wage. Women working in agriculture receive half (50%) of the flat-rate daily wage, calculated on the basis of the guaranteed minimum wage in agriculture. Full salary is paid during maternity leave to civil servants.

### **4.3. Old age benefits**

Old age benefits were first instated in 1960 and are delivered through a social insurance programme. The statutory pensionable age for men and women is 60 years of age. Insured individuals contribute at a rate of 4.74% to the fund, with the employer contributing 7.76%. The government subsidises contributions for young graduates, persons with disabilities, and other categories of workers. Legal coverage for old age benefits as a percentage of the working-age population is estimated at 44.6% and 23.1% for women, accessed from the mandatory contributory scheme. Old age effective coverage for women and men above the statutory pensionable age was last recorded at 68.8% in 2006.

### **4.4. Health coverage**

The most recent official estimates (2005) of healthcare coverage for the population were 80% (public and private). The total public and private health-care expenditure not financed by private households' out-of-pocket payments was 60.5% in 2011, at a per capita health expenditure of US\$ 161.40. Within this financing, government expenditure on health stood at US\$ 125.80 per capita in 2011. The coverage gap due to a financial resources deficit is 32.5%, using the benchmark of a median in the low vulnerability group of US\$ 239. Using the WHO benchmark of 23, the coverage gap due to health

professional staff deficit is 0.0. The percentage of live births attended by skilled health staff was 94.6% in 2006. The maternal mortality rate was estimated at 5.6 per 10,000 live births in 2010.

#### **4.5. Income support**

A 2013 review of country programmes for ensuring income support found that roughly 160,000 graduates looking for work received a monthly stipend of 200 Tunisian dinars (TND) (around 102 euro), as part of the 'AMAL' programme. However, projects aimed at improving the employability of youth (coaching, professional training) have not reached their objectives. In August 2013, the emergency programme was transformed into an 'Employment encouragement' programme that granted monthly stipends under certain conditions. However, this stipend only lasted a few months before being cancelled. As of 2013, trade unions were putting pressure on government to create an Unemployment Benefit Allowance. Regarding the distribution of unemployment in Tunisia, the unemployment rate is higher among women (who have 42% of higher education degrees) and 44% of unemployed people are between 15 and 29 years old. It is estimated that there are 691,700 unemployed people in Tunisia, 175,000 of whom (25%) have higher education degrees (Gusenbauer 2013).

#### **4.6. School feeding**

A number of collaborative initiatives between government agencies and non-governmental organisations are working to bridge gaps in ensuring social protection needs are met. The Tunisia School Feeding Development Project (DEV 200793), a partnership between government and the World Food Programme (WFP) is one such programme. Started in December 2013, its primary purpose is to strengthen Government capacity to improve the quality and sustainability of the existing national school-feeding programme, in line with the international school feeding standards outlined in WFP's School Feeding Policy. WFP has provided technical assistance and policy advice around 3 main axes: a review of the existing programme; experience sharing (in particular through study visits); and the development of a Sustainable School Feeding Strategy.

The Strategy document, drafted in 2014 after an inclusive, consensual process, establishes that ensuring an efficient social safety net is one of the main objectives for implementing a sustainable school feeding programme in Tunisia.

In terms of income transfer, school meals imply a direct assistance to parents of around 70 TND a year, which represents about 10% of the annual income of the poorest 10% in rural areas. Especially in rural areas, this is a positive incentive in the children-parent's trade-off of whether to stay at home as an economic actor to help with the chores, or go to school. The school canteen provides a general incentive to reduce school drop-outs, reinforcing the school system's role in promoting social inclusion in Tunisia. Reviewed targeting criteria will ensure the national school feeding programme's effectiveness and efficiency.

In collaboration with the Government of Tunisia, WFP is working to enhance the school feeding's programme impact in local development. School feeding is conceived a means to strengthen resilience of local rural communities, by fostering links between school feeding and local agricultural production, in the framework of the Home Grown School Feeding approach. The second phase of the project, starting in 2015, will pay special attention to foster women's opportunities by giving preference to women's community based organisations and NGOs. In particular, it is expected that, through pilot experiences, food procurement and preparation will be outsourced to local women's groups, creating income-generating opportunities for rural women at the community level.

## **Chapter 5. Informal and semi-formal safety nets**

In the months following the initial Libyan uprising in 2011, an extremely high number of refugees, some sources estimate close to 1 million, entered into Tunisia. The majority were housed in refugee camps and resettled outside of Tunisia. During this time, some 80,000 Libyans resided with Tunisian host families, who received community-based support from UNHCR (UNHCR 2011). It is unclear if similar arrangements might be made in the event of increasing violent conflict in Libya and a subsequent rise in the refugee population in Tunisia.

A number of religious charities operate in Tunisia to provide humanitarian assistance and relief. One such primary organisation is Islamic Relief Worldwide (IR), which has been working in Tunisia since 2011, when they began operations to support refugees fleeing violence in Libya as well as host Tunisian communities. IR provided refugee camps on the Tunisian border and humanitarian services to over 15,000 people. As camps were closed after 2011, they supported refugees unable to return to Libya to build new lives in Tunisia. In addition, IR implements projects in health, water and sanitation, food security, education and income-generating activities in Tunisia (IR 2014).

Until 2011, foreign remittances from Tunisian workers in Libya were a means of informal social protection and safety nets, as they supported vulnerable families at home. One of the most significant consequences of the instability in Libya on the Tunisian economy is the return of migrant workers. In 2012, around 40,000 Tunisian workers left Libya and the number will likely continue to rise as the conflict escalates. Most migrant workers in Libya originate from very poor areas, and income generated was sent as foreign remittances to support large and vulnerable families at home. The World Bank estimates that formal and informal inward remittance flows from Libya accounted for 0.56% of Tunisia's GDP in 2012. Although remittances from Libya to Tunisia are small, their loss could affect the private sector and labour markets (ESCWA 2014b).

As of early 2015, it is unclear to what extent the escalated conflict in Libya during the second half of 2014 has displaced Tunisian workers again from Libya. According to the ESCWA, the ongoing fighting has dashed hopes of rebuilding Libya in the near future, which would have provided neighbouring economies with a real supply-side stimulus and helped ease unemployment, especially among low and semi-skilled workers. In June 2014, the Tunisian Foreign Ministry issued a statement urging Tunisians to avoid travelling to Libya and for those living in Benghazi to leave the country (ESCWA 2014b).

## **Chapter 6. Programmes targeting refugees and displaced people**

As noted earlier, events in Tunisia in 2011 sparked a trend of civil protests that swept through the region, sparking what became known as the ‘Arab Spring’. Civil protests in neighbouring Libya were countered by harsh military reprisals before the eventual ousting of Col Gaddafi, causing a massive influx of Libyan refugees, Tunisian migrant workers and third country nationals into southern Tunisia. For a period of six months starting in February 2011, it is estimated that approximately one million people sought refuge or passed through Tunisia, including 200,000 non-Libyan nationals, placing significant stress on a country at the time run by an interim government (WFP 2014).

The World Food Programme (WFP) launched a Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) in southern Tunisia in 2011 and collaborated with Tunisian host communities, the UNHCR and participating NGOs providing assistance to refugees and displaced individuals from Libya.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), humanitarian issues in the country are mainly related to the gap between strong migration pressure and limited legal migration channels. Tunisia has quickly become a migration and transit country, with migrants coming mainly from the Maghreb and from Sub-Saharan Africa with the aim of reaching Europe through irregular migration (UNOCHA 2014).

Without an asylum law currently in place in Tunisia, a priority for the UNHCR has been to conduct refugee status determination while building national capacities to assure international protection of refugees and asylum-seekers. In 2015, the Office plans to partner with the Government of Tunisia in adopting and setting up a comprehensive national protection system; thereby allowing authorities to progressively assume their responsibilities under the 1951 Refugee Convention. “UNHCR will also work to ensure that refugees are granted access to public services in Tunisia. An important part of this process will be supporting local structures and organisations to provide protection and assistance, in particular for refugees and asylum-seekers with special needs. In the predominantly urban context, the organisation will implement a community-based protection approach, with the support of relevant national and international actors” (UNHCR 2015).

The UNHCR is involved with resettling refugees outside of Tunisia. Under an initiative launched in 2011, a total of 3,176 refugees departed to resettlement countries, mainly the United States (followed by Norway, Sweden, Australia, Canada and Germany) (UNHCR 2014). By January 2015, only 991 refugees were registered with UNHCR in Tunisia, but it remains to be seen if, and how, the escalated conflict in Libya will further displace people into Tunisia.

UNHCR also works to build the capacity of border officials to ensure that border management includes protecting the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. Authorities are supporting the development of a systematised response in cases of rescue at sea, in cooperation with other agencies, particularly the Tunisian Red Crescent and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

## Chapter 7. Conclusion

Since the revolution of 2011, Tunisia has been navigating its transition to democracy and developing new systems of governance whilst under tremendous impact from the conflict in neighbouring Libya. In 2011, in the early stages of the conflict, over one million refugees passed through Tunisia from Libya, the majority of whom have either returned to Libya or have relocated to their home countries. Tunisia was termed a ‘humanitarian corridor’ during this time period and the socio-economic, political and environmental impacts of this influx of refugees must be taken into account when understanding the constraints and opportunities for Tunisia, now and in the future. The ongoing conflict in Libya, particularly in the last six months of 2014, threatens to destabilise progress made in the Tunisian political and economic landscapes since 2011.

With a recently elected parliament, prime minister and president, a new constitution (2014) and considerable policy debate and discourse around social protection in the last few months of 2014, Tunisia stands at an important point in time to envision and implement an improved social protection system. At the core of the 2011 popular uprising, and key to the success of the democratic transition thus far, has been a social commitment to social equity and the welfare development of Tunisian society. In the period between the 2011 uprising and the recent elections, political conflict and the struggle for power has taken centre stage in the public arena, with the particulars of a new social contract largely placed aside until issues of governance were resolved. Now that the recent political transitions have taken place, and presuming that political stability increases going forward, much of the important policy debates that have been happening can begin to be implemented to provide more comprehensive social protection, as well as ensuring food and nutrition security amidst various contextual stressors.

This scoping study demonstrates that Tunisia has a strong existing social protection system, which can be built upon as the country continues its democratic transition, to ensure that the desire for social equity and welfare development that inspired the 2011 uprisings are realised. In the context of this developing political landscape and currently ongoing policy debates regarding social protection and welfare recommendations in Tunisia, the ability of this scoping study to make sound and well-informed policy recommendations is constrained. However, it is possible to make some general recommendations in respect of pertinent issues to consider in drafting social protection policies and programmes in Tunisia. These issues include the following.

- Tunisia is undergoing a demographic transition – specifically, an ageing population. This has implications for future social protection needs for the elderly, as well as the economic and social needs and responsibilities of the younger generations.
- Social security reforms are needed that are sustainable, universal and linked to the provision of high quality services.
- Healthcare and public health services need to also address the ‘nutrition transition’ that is prevalent in Tunisia, which occurs when the population displays a high prevalence of obesity and overweight along with undernutrition.
- Agricultural investment could have positive impacts in terms of both economic growth and nutrition indicators for the Tunisian population, but its potential is being under-exploited.

Special attention should also be given to the social and economic needs of vulnerable groups within Tunisian society, including the youth, informal workers, women, refugees and IDPs.

- An increased focus is urgently needed on creating employment opportunities for young people, for economic growth and social stability reasons, and also (as noted) in light of the ageing population and its implications for social protection needs in Tunisia.
- Social protection for workers in the informal economy must be strengthened to ensure progress towards universal coverage.
- Social protection policies in Tunisia would benefit from a careful examination of dimensions of gender inequality in society, and identification of targeted strategies to address them.
- The social and economic impacts of refugees and internally displaced people in Tunisia must be accounted for in social protection strategies, keeping in mind the needs of both the displaced populations and their local host communities.

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