Evaluation summary
Strengthening youth participation in Ettadhamen project, Tunisia – Internal evaluation
January 2018

Evaluation theme
Governance and state-citizen relations

Introduction
This summary outlines the internal evaluation of the Strengthening youth participation in Ettadhamen project, which ran from September 2015 – December 2017 and was implemented by International Alert (Alert) in collaboration with LocalGlobal. The project aimed to encourage youth and civil society participation in local decision-making through training and capacity building, creating and institutionalising participatory mechanisms, and engagement with the municipality and a social enterprise project to appeal for local and national authorities to address the social, economic and political marginalisation of young people in the area.

This report shall provide some background to the project, detail the evaluation’s methodology, and summarise the findings, lessons and recommendations described in the evaluation.

Background to the project
Ettadhamen is a working-class town situated in Greater Tunis. The area played a decisive role in the social uprisings that led to the fall of the former regime. Today however, communities, particularly young people, suffer from the stigma associated with poverty, crime and Salafism, an image which has been played upon by the Tunisian media following a series of clashes between the police and Salafist groups. Ettadhamen is seen as a recruiting ground for groups promoting violent extremism, including those sending Tunisians to Syria for jihad.

Young people in Ettadhamen report feeling marginalised and express grievance towards the state. This project aimed to directly address this through forging links with authorities and engaging youth in decision-making, thereby reducing a source of grievance for young people.

The intervention aimed to reduce marginalisation of youth through four phases of activities:

1. Establishing the youth platform, I Change, and providing training and institutional capacity building to the platform.
2. Establishing the youth participation programme – carrying out activities aimed at youth participation including local diagnostic and citizen forums, in order to support phase 3.

3. Building a relationship between local authorities and the population, including young people through lobbying and advocacy (by I Change and International Alert), and participatory budgeting (in collaboration with local partner LocalGlobal).

4. Launching a pilot project, spearheaded by I Change to support barbechas (informal rubbish collectors) through a new pilot social enterprise project.

The evaluation assessed the following project outcomes:

1. Increased knowledge, understanding and leadership of young people.
2. Increased sense of political, economic, social and cultural inclusion of young people and other project beneficiaries (e.g. barbecha).
3. Increased trust, communication and collaboration between local Civil Society Organisations and the municipality.
4. Reduced sense of marginalisation and grievance of young people related to exclusion by state authorities.

Methodology

The evaluation’s methodology involved a review of project documents and a series of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FDGs) with youth, local delegates, project partners and project staff (5 FGDs and 5 interviews in total). Due to time and logistical limitations it was not possible for the evaluator to interview municipal officials or members of the local community. Whilst it was an internal evaluation, the evaluator was not directly involved in design or implementation of the project and therefore could offer an ‘outside’ perspective. Interviews were held in French or in Arabic with French translation.

Summary of findings

- Through the project, Alert trained over 40 youth in a range of topics including leadership, local governance, organisational governance, street art and usage of the OpenStreetMap (OSM). The young people interviewed unanimously agreed that OpenStreetMap was a major strength of the project, seen as innovative and a “pull” for youth to participate and learn a new skill. Approximately 50 barbecha were given training on their rights and safety.
- OpenStreetMap and the local diagnostic (an assessment using OSM mapping to identify needs and gaps in services etc.) were very effective tools and fundamental to laying the groundwork for the participatory budgeting process. The maps produced by OSM were well received by municipal officials, as they did not have access to such data before and communities also valued the process and gained vital information from the mapping.
- Establishing and leading I Change and The Barbecha’s Association has given youth and the barbecha a great sense of pride. By the end of the project, youth and
barbecha participants had noted a significant improvement in terms of their social, cultural and political inclusion.

- Establishment of The Barbecha’s Association is an essential step in increasing barbecha social and economic security and status. The barbecha will still need further capacity building so that they can effectively manage the project in the future.

- While project participants widely agreed that they had increased access and engagement with authorities because of the project, and that “overall the situation has improved,” there were still high levels of mistrust towards the local authority.

- This experience marked the first use of a participatory budget in the marginalised suburb and was the most significant in terms of budget share allocated to projects, citizen participation and ownership by local organisations nation-wide. In other contexts, such as La Marsa, only 5% of the budget was allocated for the participatory approach, in contrast to Ettadhamen where the allocation accounted for 50%.

- The unstable political and economic climate, both within Ettadhamen and across Tunisia, has had a significant impact on the project. This instability coupled with reticence of municipal administration to engage with participants reduced the project’s ability to institutionalise participation to the extent that it was intended.

**Recommendations**

- Scale up and evidence model in other Tunis suburbs and governorates to provide an example of how participative approaches can work and the value of these.

- Continue to work with local and national civil society to institutionalise participatory approaches and mechanisms. In addition, further develop coalitions of CSOs and support I Change to engage with other local and national NGOs to build its profile and credibility.

- Provide further capacity building for municipal personnel and candidates in municipal elections in participative approaches.

- Alongside the participatory budget process, develop complementary community-based projects which address identified local needs that do not rely on the municipal budget.

- Facilitate exchange between municipalities that have successfully piloted participatory approaches or social enterprise projects to gain exposure and share learnings.

- Strengthen focus on addressing mistrust between citizens and the Police. Interviews and research conducted for this project highlight the poor relationship many residents of marginalised areas have with the Police. Strengthening youth participation involves developing robust relationships between all authorities and young people based on the rule of law and human rights and due to the Police’s mandate to protect citizens.

- Develop a standardised monitoring framework to track key indicators related to participation, social and economic inclusion, and advocacy outcomes for future projects. These would be developed as part of a baseline assessment in consultations with project beneficiaries and based on learning from this phase of the project.