



**Micro-credit summit
March 2016
Intervention of Mrs Essma Ben Hamida**

Introduction

Enda inter-arabe is now in its 27th year of activity. It introduced micro-credit in 1995. At end-2015, we had over 270 000 active clients and provided loans valued at \$225 million with a portfolio of \$ 150 million. Our 80 branches throughout the country were served by a staff of 1 300, mostly graduates. Enda has been self-sufficient since 2003.

This January, the micro-finance company we created, Enda Tamweel, began operations, taking over the financial services, while the NGO, Enda inter-arabe, will be expanding and broadening our non-financial services. Throughout these 26 years, we have been practising partnerships, both before and since micro-credit. We expect these to expand now that the NGO (non-financial services) will be separate from the company.

Enda deals with a broad range of micro-enterprises, including over 40% in rural areas. I shall illustrate our partnerships with several examples.

Enda's Bidaya programme

Enda introduced its bidaya programme at end-2011 in the wake of the revolution as one answer to the rising unemployment problem in Tunisia. It aims to encourage young people to create their own jobs through a micro-enterprise. In the four years since then, 10 000 loans have been made to 8 000 young creators. Between them, these have in turn created 5 000 salaried jobs. Not all the start-ups have been entirely successful. However, 85% are still operating, and of those, 15% are facing difficulties. In the current difficult economic conditions, this can be seen as a considerable success.

As part of the selection process, Enda provides advice for the preparation of a business plan. In itself, this process forces the "candidates" to reflect seriously on their future business. But a major weakness, and which certainly explains part of the difficulties, is post-creation support. For this, we are therefore seeking partnerships, mainly with private-sector actors, hoping to harness the practical experience of business people to assist these young start-ups. This exists on a limited scale in Tunisia. But it rarely, if ever, targets poor people or micro-enterprises. We shall need substantial numbers of mentors but they will gain great satisfaction from the support they provide.

Supporting garbage sorters

Tunisia has some 8 000 garbage sorters, known as barbecha, mainly involved in plastic and metal. Many are aged 50 years and over. Some are women. They have no status and are usually looked down on as dirty by the very people whose neighbourhoods they clean up for free. Enda has introduced a special product for these groups in order to contribute to on-going efforts by other actors to improve their working and living conditions. I can mention three partners in this new endeavour:

- an NGO specially set up by GIZ, Sweepnet, a regional network for exchanging experience and expertise in solid waste management in the MENA region;
- two garbage sorter associations, both in the suburbs of Tunis, also set up with support from GIZ. The aim

of these associations is to gain recognition and formalisation of the barbecha's activity, and improvements in their working and living conditions; and finally

- a public institution, the National Agency for Waste Management (ANGED) which develops national waste management programmes, particularly solid waste collection, sorting, recycling and recovery. These partnerships enhance the activities already being undertaken by Enda and another MFI, as well as by the garbage sorters themselves and it can be hoped that the support will grow. For example, visual recognition will be gained by a distinguishable jacket and health will be improved by the use of gloves and by a hope-for free vaccination programme. Maybe a programme on the TV for instance, could alert the general population to the importance of the barbecha's role as well as to the difficulties of their work.

The National Agency for Employment and Independent Work (ANETI).

This agency, which began operations in 1994, provides training in a number of technical fields, as varied as plumbing or decorative candlemaking and in management. It has other training programmes, GERME (Improving the management of your company) and CEFE (to train people for entrepreneurship). In 2015, ANETI provided various types of training (through private training companies) to over 1 500 people. The partnership with Enda began some ten years ago, mainly benefitting clients wishing to learn a new skill and/or recycle from their current activity. Enda has also benefitted from this partnership through another job-creating internship programme, SIVP, with roughly half of our new recruits taken on as interns, most of whom are then recruited.

Training for more effective work

Enda has teamed up with an international NGO, Education for Employment (EFE), to train our staff on a cost-sharing basis. Since this partnership began in 2014, 200 Enda staff have been trained and this has improved their ability to better serve our clients.

Gender training

On a smaller but no less important scale, we ran a gender training course funded by the French cooperation programme in Tunisia and involved a dozen other Tunisian associations. In the Arab world, as indeed the world over, improving gender consciousness and gender relations is essential for improving livelihoods, among the population as well as within the institutions which serve them.

Establishment of central purchasing and buying groups

Finally, let me mention a private/civil society partnership in an innovative pilot programme. This new collaboration will enable young small shopkeepers selling food products in rural areas to access supplies through a central purchasing organisation at a reasonable cost, using mobile technology. The partners are Making Cents International with Silatech, with funding from IFAD. Mobipos is a dedicated app. Enda provides the clients with micro-finance and also collaborates with risk management and its mobile payments system. This pilot project will serve to upscale the project which can then be replicated in other countries.

Conclusion

All these partnerships enable Enda to strengthen its support for its micro-entrepreneur clients and to go beyond the services it is able to provide directly. We hope to expand them in the future, as our resources increase thanks to international cooperation support and to the dividends from Enda Tamweel of which Enda inter-arabe is the majority shareholder.