ITC is committed to supporting small businesses all over the world despite the current COVID-19 pandemic. Staff members are working remotely, managing operations virtually while office buildings in Geneva and around the world are closed in accordance with the United Nations and host countries directives. As for all ITC programmes, GTEX/MENATEX continues to deliver trade-related technical assistance to the T&C sector. Overall, activities are NOT stopping, and we will do everything possible to remain active to assist partners and beneficiaries, to the extent possible. All dedicated staff under the programme, including our national project coordinators and local consultants are prepared to assist enterprises and institutions through phone, video calls, emails, and in some special cases on-site. You can find their contact details on our GTEX/MENATEX website for your questions and concerns.
Our dedicated team is working on enhancing the capacity of the organization to deliver virtual activities, allowing businesses to strengthen their resilience in the current crisis and start planning for the future. Several training modules on a variety of topics – including e-commerce, competitiveness in creative industries, corporate social responsibility, and developing business plans – are available on a virtual learning platform, the SME Trade Academy. All courses are free, and further modules will be rolled out in 2020. As we develop T&C-specific trainings, we will also make them available on-line. We will remain flexible depending on how the situation evolves and stand ready to adjust and support our partners.

We wish you and your families all the best and especially good health. May you all be well and remain safe.

The Fibre Textiles and Clothing Team

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**Egypt**

*ITC’s programme for the textile and clothing sector in the Middle East and North Africa is making progress in Egypt*

Egypt’s textile and clothing sector stands to benefit from new job opportunities and more exports after the first meeting of the steering committee of national stakeholders took place in Cairo, Egypt, in March 2020 as part of International Trade Centre’s GTEX project. During the meeting ITC’s Programme Manager for the GTEX MENATEX programme, Matthias Knappe presented the results of trade support institutional and enterprises assessments covering geographical locations, types of activity, gender analysis, and social and environmental compliance, as well as an assessment of current and future markets and challenges.

The GTEX/MENATEX project in Egypt visited and assessed 46 small and medium-sized
companies and eight trade support institutions,’ Mr Knappe said. ‘Most of the enterprises are located in Alexandria and Cairo and 63% are producers of knitwear, while 35% produce wovenwear. The result of the assessments will support the project to understand the areas both enterprises and key support institutions need improvements.

For now, 28 small and medium enterprises have been selected and, to reach a total of 35 companies, other beneficiaries will be chosen by considering products that are under-represented in the group such companies making hosiery, sportswear and men’s shirts.

In Egypt, the textile and clothing sector is the second-biggest industrial sector after the agro-industry. It comprises around 4,000 companies, of which 500-600 export overseas.

Cherine Khallaf, chairperson of the development projects council at the Egyptian Ministry of Trade & Industry, said that the GTEX project is an opportunity to boost all of Egypt’s industrial sector and exports.

‘Egypt can improve its export potential to the US market while also expanding our presence in Europe and other Arab and African countries’, said Khallaf.

Corinne Henchoz, Head of Development Cooperation at the Embassy of Switzerland, said sustainable social impact was an important impetus in addition to the development of export capacity.

‘In Egypt, 56% of the employees in textile and clothing companies are women,’ she said. ‘In the GTEX programme, gender plays an important role. Studies show that increased female workforce in a given industry contributes to enhanced efficiency, in terms of working processes and quality of production’.

Egypt’s GTEX/MENATEX project will focus on the apparel sector. ITC analysis has shown that the apparel industry has strong export and high employment potential, and relatively low investment requirements compared to other segments in the value chain.

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Morocco

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Moroccan textile sector learns about new markets
ITC launches a series of training courses on market profiling for trade support institutions, members of the textile and clothing ecosystem in Morocco

Fifteen senior representatives from four trade support institutions in Morocco have developed the knowledge to build market profiles following a five-day training course organized by the International Trade Centre (ITC) in partnership with the Swiss Import Promotion Program (SIPPO).

The first training took place on 2–5 March 2020 in Casablanca, Morocco, and focused on the use of ITC market analysis tools that provide indicators on international demand, export performance and competitive analysis, alternative markets and regulatory requirements. Once familiar with the tools needed to identify markets, participants are able to develop market profiles and define strategies and business plans for exporting products to growth markets.

The workshops were held as part of ITC’s Global Textiles and Clothing programme (GTEX) and Middle East and North Africa Textile programme (MENATEX) and aimed to fill information gaps on export markets affecting small and medium enterprises as well as strengthening the knowledge of national trade support institutions.

The GTEX / MENATEX programme aims to improve the business environment and the performance of trade support institutions operating in the textiles and clothing sector, and to strengthen the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises in the textiles and clothing sector in order to enable them to develop and diversify their exports.

The GTEX/ MENATEX Morocco programme is co-financed by the government of Morocco, Switzerland and Sweden.

Kyrgyzstan

The International Trade Centre's GTEX programme in Kyrgyzstan promotes diversity and inclusion – with positive results for people with disabilities and companies alike.
When Rustam Mamadali began work at a garment-manufacturing factory five years ago, he got more than just a job. The Batken, Kyrgyzstan native was born with a hearing and speech impairment and working in the textile and clothing sector in Kyrgyzstan gave him the opportunity to fulfill his potential.

His employer, Barkhat – a beneficiary of the ITC’s GTEX programme in Kyrgyzstan – is a great example of the positive benefits of inclusive and diverse hiring. The company employs many people with disabilities to work as machine operators in its sewing departments.

Nurjan Kunasova, director of Barkhat, says that people with disabilities in Kyrgyzstan often face employment discrimination – with negative consequences for the economy. ‘The clothing industry needs workers and hiring more disabled people represents a good option for both the employee and the company,’ said Kunasova.

In Kyrgyzstan, more than 176,000 people live with a disability, 40% of whom are of working age. It is estimated that 80–85% of them are unemployed and face discrimination in the labour market.

Rustam broke barriers as the first person with a disability to join Barkhat’s workforce. But two more people with speech and hearing disabilities have since joined the company.

The positive experience of people with disabilities working for the textile and clothing sector became a video project developed between GTEX and the Kyrgyzstan government. The success stories were shared social media and local TV channels.

As part of its work in Kyrgyzstan, GTEX has organized a series of training courses on social responsibility (ISO 26000), environmental management (ISO 14001) and quality management (ISO 9001) among others.

Altogether, 54 companies, including 41 women-owned enterprises, have participated in 21 different training courses.

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**Tajikistan**

*Fashion and sewing professionals in Tajikistan learn the latest techniques*
Eighteen fashion and sewing experts from educational institutions and clothing companies in Tajikistan have successfully completed an intensive training course on the most modern design technologies and innovative trends in fashion. The course covered both theoretical and practical skills in design, garment construction, and dressmaking. Participants learned to adapt a basic pattern into various dress styles and deepened their knowledge of the production of skirts and pants, as well as expanding their understanding of new technologies in the clothing sector.

‘In Tajikistan, we usually have access to outdated technologies compared to developed countries,’ said Manuchehr Sharifov, Assistant Professor at the Technological University of Tajikistan. ‘The training course provided new knowledge to expand our work and improve our techniques.’

Zebunisso Boboeva, Senior Lecturer at the Khujand Polytechnic Institute of the Technical University of Tajikistan also emphasised the importance of learning to use new technologies. ‘The training course was very high-level,’ she said. ‘Many of the topics approached were new to me and it helped me to gain self-confidence that I can do a great job using new technologies to design and make clothes.’

For both professors, the knowledge acquired will be useful for their classes and will contribute to the preparation of young specialists. To continue the learning experience, an e-learning course will be created by Singapore’s Textile and Fashion Industry Training Centre to provide other professionals with the skills and information about tailoring. The training course ITC’s Global Textiles and Clothing Programme (GTEX) and was organised in partnership with the Technological University of Tajikistan and Singapore’s Textile and Fashion Industry Training Centre. The course took place at the Technological University of Tajikistan in Dushanbe from 3–15 February 2020.
Jordan's textile and clothing sector stands to benefit from new job opportunities and greater exports thanks to a project launched in February, in Amman, Jordan

Funded by the Government of Sweden, the Improving the International Competitiveness of the Textile and Clothing in Jordan project will be implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC) in partnership with the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Jordan Chamber of Industry.

Work on the project, which will form part of ITC’s MENATEX programme that provides support to four countries, was initiated in 2019. It will help improve the competitiveness of Jordanian textile exporters to stimulate job creation and improve economic benefits along the value chain. As part of this, twenty companies have been selected to receive individual support to help them strengthen their operations, improve their social and environmental sustainability and connect with buyers.

The MENATEX Jordan project will also work to improve the eco-system around the companies by providing assistance to four trade and investment support institutions to upgrade their service portfolio to members.

Jordan’s textile and clothing industry is one of the country’s main export sectors. In 2018, the country exported more than $1.8 billion worth of textiles and clothing, which was almost entirely comprised of knit apparel.

The MENATEX project was launched by Imad Tarawneh, assistant secretary-general of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, Hani Abu Hasasan, vice-president of the Jordan Chamber of Industry. Commenting on the project, Abu Hasasan said it was crucial in providing greater information and access to stakeholders in the sector. He also underlined the importance of the textile and clothing sector to the Jordanian economy and call on eligible enterprises to benefit from this project.

Ihab Qadri, responsible for leather and garments at the Jordan Chamber of Industry, said: ‘This project is an innovative opportunity to increase Jordan’s textile and clothing exports. The MENATEX project is an opportunity for us to strengthen the industry and improve our trade connections with the other countries in the Middle East and North Africa.’

Eman Beseiso, Project Manager for Jordan at ITC, explained that ITC had conducted company assessments with enterprises, allowing for a greater understanding of how the sector operates and its priorities. Going forward, we will in partnership with the beneficiaries find mutual agreement on the strategic plan and the roadmap for implementation' Beseiso said.

The MENATEX project ‘Improving the international competitiveness of the textile and clothing sector in Jordan’ is part of the regional MENATEX programme that covers four countries in the MENA region: Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. The International Trade Centre, with the support from the Swedish government, implements the programme, which is will until the end of 2021.

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Tunisia
A fourth group of textile and clothing enterprises in Tunisia to receive support from ITC’s GTEX MENATEX programme

With a focus on young fashion designers, the sub-sector group was formed during a meeting with beneficiaries in late January 2020. Previously assembled clothing industry sub-sector groups have focused on manufacturers of jeans and denim clothes, lingerie and beachwear manufacturers, and manufacturers of work and protective wear.

The new sub-sector group for young Tunisian fashion designers comprises 17 companies, all of which were selected following a call for applications.

‘The launch of the 4th sub-sector group allows young designers to integrate well into the industry and add an element of creativity and originality – elements often missing in traditional companies,’ said Matthias Knappe, Programme Manager for the GTEX MENATEX programme.

The launch took the form of a TEDx-style presentation where each young designer presented their brand, their journey, their vision and their expectations of GTEX MENATEX. Tunisia’s Minister of Industry and Small and Medium Enterprises Slim Fériani, Anna Block Mazoyer, Ambassador of Sweden in Tunisia, and Etienne Thévoz, Ambassador of Switzerland in Tunisia attended the event.

Knappe said promoting young designers was important: ‘It is essential that the programme works with young people in order to link them to the main clothing sector in Tunisia and to strengthen their capacity to export.’

In Tunisia, the textile and clothing industry is crucially important as the sector ranks among the leading suppliers of manufacturing jobs. Employing more than 160,000 people, the sector represents around 20% of the market share of Tunisian exports.

GTEX MENATEX supports 50 Tunisian companies in the textile field to benefit from this programme. They are encouraged in their production to move from subcontracting to the export of finished products and the development of collections. The programme plans to:

• improve the business environment and the performance of trade support institutions in the
sector
• improve the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the textiles and clothing sector
The new sub-sector group will have the same approach adopted for the previous three, and run until 2021.

The GTEX MENATEX programme is funded by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) of the Swiss Confederation and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), focusing on six priority countries (Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan Tajikistan and Tunisia). The programme aims to encourage exports of textiles and clothing from developing countries to promote employment and income generation throughout the value chain.

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