Development of SMEs Exports through Virtual Market Places
**GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE:** Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia

**TIME-FRAME:** 2014-2017

**BUDGET:** US$ 3,000,000

**FUNDING:** The project is funded by the Deauville Partnership MENA Transition Fund.

**OBJECTIVE:** To create jobs for youth and women by increasing SMEs’ exports through Virtual Market Places and support institutional reforms to create enabling for e-commerce environment.

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**Why VMP?**

The global e-commerce market has undergone significant growth in the past decade and continues to expand. Hundreds of Virtual Market Places (VMP) are already operating in the world, connecting producers and consumers around the globe and reducing geographical barriers to trade.

Businesses from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region are relatively under-represented in the VMPs and, thus, are not visible for the millions of e-buyers. Nevertheless, an absolute majority of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the MENA region considers VMPs as a positive factor for opening new markets and rising revenues, as revealed by the demand survey among SMEs recently conducted by ITC in the Arab countries. Enabling SMEs to effectively use and benefit from e-commerce would lead to an increase of SMEs’ revenues and as a result to more job creation, which is essentially important for the region with a fast-growing young population.

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**Project objectives**

This innovative project aims to unlock the untapped economic growth potential of SMEs in Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia by improving the e-commerce business environment and boosting exports through Virtual Market Places (VMPs).

The ultimate objective of the project is to create employment, particularly for youth and women, and to ensure more inclusive and sustainable social and economic development. This will be achieved through three specific outcomes:

- Promoting enabling environment for e-commerce through implementation of key reforms;

- Strengthening the capacity of SMEs to use and benefit from VMPs resulting in new export transactions;

- Building new partnerships with VMPs through Business Intelligence and Certification process and encouraging their use by SMEs.
Implementation strategy

The project focuses on building the capacity of 600 selected SMEs in Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia (200 companies in each country) and targets three priority product groups:

- specialised gourmet agro-processed foods;
- handicrafts;
- services.

The project acts at three levels:

At the trade policy and business environment level: reforms will be undertaken to promote e-commerce development;

At the institutional level: the capacity of Trade Support Institutions to promote online business will be enhanced through involvement of professional Export Advisers in the field of e-commerce;

At the enterprise level: new partnerships with selected VMPs facilitating the SMEs’ access and supporting their visibility on the internet will be built. The SMEs will gain an access to the premium accounts and will be assisted in obtaining a trust label through a rigorous certification process.

As a result, it is expected that at least 600 SMEs will be registered and dynamically involved in VMPs and at least 300 of them achieve export transactions.

Implementing partners

The project is implemented by ITC in close collaboration with the World Bank and partnership with the Ministries of Trade and Trade Support Institutions in Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia.

Ministries of Trade

The Ministries of Trade in the three countries act as focal points, providing guidance and assuring that the project is implemented in accordance with the national development priorities. The project’s focal points are:

- Jordan: Ministry of Industry and Trade;
- Morocco: Ministry of Industry, Trade, Investment and the Digital Economy;
- Tunisia: Ministry of Trade.

Trade Promotion Organizations

The national Trade Promotion Organizations are the main institutional partners that facilitate the project’s implementation and ensure the sustainability of the results:
- Jordan Enterprise Development Corporation (JEDCO);
- Maroc Export;
- Centre de promotion des Exportations de la Tunisie (CEPEX).

Other Trade Support Institutions

Other partners include chambers of commerce, professional and business associations, including sector and product specialized organizations.
About the International Trade Centre

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. Established in 1964, ITC is the only development agency that is fully dedicated to supporting the internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which are proven to be major job creators and engines of inclusive growth.

ITC works with developing countries and economies in transition to achieve ‘trade impact for good’. It provides knowledge such as trade and market intelligence, technical support and practical capacity building to policy makers, the private sector and trade and investment support organizations (TISIs) as well as linkages to markets.

About the World Bank

The World Bank is a United Nations international financial institution that provides loans to developing countries for capital programs. The World Bank is a component of the World Bank Group, and a member of the United Nations Development Group.

The World Bank Group has set two goals for the world to achieve by 2030:
- End extreme poverty by decreasing the percentage of people living on less than $1.90 a day to no more than 3%;
- Promote shared prosperity by fostering the income growth of the bottom 40% for every country.

About the MENA Transition Fund

In May 2011, the G8 launched the Deauville Partnership as a response to the historical changes underway in several countries in the Middle East and North Africa region. The Deauville Partnership was launched as a long-term, global initiative that provides Arab countries in transition with a framework based on technical support to: strengthen governance for transparent, accountable governments; provide an economic framework for sustainable and inclusive growth.

To support the countries in transition to formulate policies and programs and implement reforms, the Deauville Partnership set up the MENA Transition Fund.

For more information on this project, visit our page on the internet: http://www.intracen.org/About-VMP-Project/