

Maghreb Economic Forum

# Biennial Report

S I N C E 2 0 1 1



## PROJECTS

...

Mushawarat | Bounoud.tn |  
Professional Fellows Program

## RESEARCHES

...

Radicalization and Inclusion | New  
Policies To Build Resilient Economy In  
Tunisia.

## CONFRENCES

...

On Think Tank Summit | TTCSP  
| Quarterly Meeting of Maghreb  
Entrepreneurs

2021-2022

## About the MAGHREB ECONOMIC FORUM

The Maghreb Economic Forum is a Think-and-Do-Tank based in Tunis working on ECONOMIC and SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT in the Greater Maghreb region. The Maghreb Economic Forum (MEF) is an independent Think-and-Do Tank founded in 2011 on the premise of supporting economic and social development in the Maghreb region.

MEF's mission has always been to convene and mobilize diverse actors to catalyze sustainable economic and social development in the Maghreb.

In this endeavor, MEF operates by :

- Conducting research and publishing policy analysis on contemporary issues in the Maghreb. MEF masters the different instruments of scientific analysis, the concern for accuracy in grasping the complexity of the national and regional situations, and the capacity to exchange and dialogue in mutual respect with the supporters of different perspectives.
- Mobilizing knowledge and ideas to influence the policymaking process.
- Fostering dialogue among key community stakeholders.
- Contributing to the emergence of an enlightened, informed, and involved Tunisian civil society in order to preserve the democratic conditions for the management of public policies.
- Encouraging the active participation of civil society and decision-makers in the development of public policies and in their governance.
- Promoting and facilitating political dialogue and the exchange of good practices between public and private actors on issues of democracy, security, education, and culture in order to promote political dialogue. Dialogue and education are at the heart of our mission.
- Reinventing the role of think tanks: this means moving out of the self-referential bubbles, engaging critically with power, and rethinking responsibilities toward society at large. This does not divert from the original mission of think tanks — to provide research on policy issues for government and centers of decision-making — but it would help give them contemporary relevance, integrity, quality, and autonomy from power.

In a few years, the MEF has become an actor uniting around it a rich and varied ecosystem (institutions, universities, colleges, public and private companies, and media). The governance of the MEF is organized around an office, an orientation council, and a board of directors made up of personalities who are leaders in their field. The MEF is a non-partisan, financially independent organization and declares no conflict of interest.

The ability of the MEF to create links at different levels was highlighted: a link within civil society through the facilitation of strategic debate and educational work; a link between citizens and decision-makers when it comes to alerting the authorities on certain issues; finally, between decision-makers, thanks to the organization of formal or informal meetings, allowing reflection and high-level exchanges. We have always been reminded of our essential advisory role, to provide players with original insight, in-depth reflection, and the hindsight essential for decision-making.

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Through this report, the Maghreb Economic Forum seeks to catch its most important achievements during the last couple of years and consolidate them within the monitoring of the economic and social movement in Tunisia and the Greater Maghreb. The present report is one of the Maghreb Economic Forum's outputs in this field, besides several other reference documents, bulletins, and publications, that it produces periodically.

We are proud, as a think-and-do-tank, to be one of the rare voices in the Greater Maghreb that always seek to address the most important issues affecting the region and approach them in a serious manner. Despite the highly complex situation it's facing, the multiple open conflicts, and the diplomatic crisis between some of its member States, we, at MEF, profoundly believe that our region shall overcome this strife, and will become a leader at the regional and global levels and move towards a better future.

*Slim Othmani*



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**Our region has all the potential to become a leader at the regional and global levels and move towards a better future.**

# Activities Timeline

Webinars  
Conferences  
Projects

Programs  
Researches  
Workshops





## Webinar

# THE IMPORTANCE OF THINK TANKS IN TIMES OF CRISIS.

## THINK TANKS AND CIVIL SOCIETIES PROGRAM | UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

As the annual Why Think Tanks Matter Forum and the 2020 Global Go To Think Tank Report Launch – initially scheduled for January 28, 2021 – went virtual due to the Covid-19 pandemic, The Maghreb Economic Forum organized a Webinar on how think tanks can make a difference in Tunisia.

The event took place on January 29, 2021, at 2 pm. The webinar highlighted the critical work think tanks perform and how they have helped lives and livelihoods. During the discussion, other topics were touched upon related to the role of the private sector, the confusing think tanks discourse, and the necessity of multiplying such initiatives, especially in this fuzzy context.

It is now more important than ever to focus on their role in helping tackle the different issues emerging from the covid-19 pandemic. We had Mr. Karim Ammar from IPASSS Think Tank and Mr. Hachemi Alaya from TEMA Think Tank joining us.



## Webinar

# THE 2ND QUARTERLY MEETING OF MAGHREB ENTREPRENEURS.

## MEF TUNISIA - CARE ALGERIA - ICEM MOROCCO

The current situation in the Maghreb could be summed up in one question: Why are we collectively producing individually unwanted results? Throughout this year, CARE, ICEM, and MEF have organized online meetings with the participation of many corporate leaders and economic experts to assess the economic impact of the synergy between the different Maghreb countries.

The Maghreb represents a tremendous opportunity for entrepreneurs to bring a bit of fresh air into their business which can be found in many sectors namely, the automotive industry, offshoring, energy, renewable energy, water industry, waste management, health sector, farming, food industry, telecommunication, culture, etc.





PROGRAM

# PROFESSIONAL FELLOWS PROGRAM.

LEGACY INTERNATIONAL

The Professional Fellows Program (PFP) for economic empowerment in the Middle East and North Africa is a two-way exchange program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and designed to promote mutual understanding, enhance leadership and professional skills, and build lasting, sustainable partnerships between mid-level emerging leaders committed to strengthening their communities through social entrepreneurship and workforce development.

The Maghreb Economic Forum was responsible for arranging the following:

- Coordinate with the Fellows to arrange professional virtual consultations and webinars in the workplaces of the Fellows who traveled to the US.
- Coordinate with the Fellows to arrange cultural exchange activities online between the US delegation and participants to give a sense of the history and culture of the region.
- Recruit participants (in consultation with Fellows) for webinars via social media and other advertising methods.
- Provide meeting space and connectivity (as needed) to Fellows and participants to attend virtual sessions.
- Provide translation services as needed (if the audience does not speak sufficient English).

The program took place in Virginia and Washington D.C. with Fellowship placements in either Austin Texas or Washington DC.

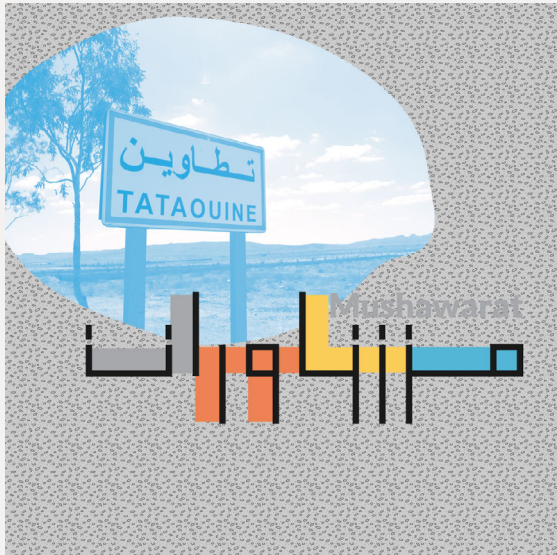


PROJECT

# PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNANCE OF NATURAL RESOURCES.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY

This project aims at providing the civil society in Gafsa and Tataouine with the capacity to advocate for better natural resource governance. It revolves around understanding the situation of national resource governance including revenue-sharing mechanisms, corporate social responsibility, and access to available open data. It also includes modules on the decentralization process in Tunisia, including legal responsibilities of local institutions, challenges, and opportunities for local civil society, as well as policy analysis and evaluation techniques, focusing on policy briefs and advocacy tools.



[Read more.](#)

WEBINAR

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT / MAGHREB INTEGRATION.

KING FAISAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND ISLAMIC STUDIES

The Maghreb Economic Forum was privileged to be represented by its Board Member Mrs. Lilia Naas at the Panel Discussion on Maghreb integration hosted by King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies. Despite similarities in ethnicities and religion and a shared historical experience, the Maghreb remains one of the least economically integrated regions in the world. The Arab Maghreb Union, which was established in 1989 to promote intra-regional cooperation and economic integration, has been largely dormant in recent years. However, the challenges brought about by the global pandemic have made growing intra-regional trade and cooperation once again the case.



King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies

## Have Different Experiences of Economic Development in the Maghreb Impacted Regional Integration?



**Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Aweishag**  
Assistant Secretary-General,  
Political Affairs and Negotiations,  
Secretariat General of the Gulf  
Cooperation Council



**Zaid M. Belbagi**  
Partner,  
Hardcastle Advisory



**Jon Marks**  
Chairman and Founder,  
Cross-border Information



**Dr. Adeel Malik**  
Globe Fellow, the Economies  
of Muslim Societies &  
Associate Professor in  
Development Economics,  
University of Oxford



**Abdelmalek Alaoui**  
Chairman, Institut Marocain  
d'Intelligence Stratégique



**Lilia Hachem Naas**  
Member of the Board,  
Maghreb Economic Forum

CONFERENCE

# THE KICK-OFF THE 3RD EDITION OF 2063 ACADEMY YOUTH DIALOGUE.

AGENDA 2063 | THE AFRICA WE WANT

The Maghreb Economic Forum worked with Atlas for Development, the African Union Development Agency, I4policy, and Facebook Africa on the organization of the full-day training on the Agenda2063 and the 3rd edition of the 2063 Academy which aims at gathering youth from different nationalities. The academy consists of a series of training, aimed at strengthening the skills of young people, in advocacy, policy design, critical thinking, and promoting intra and inter-generational dialogue, and offers expert panels and inspiring talks. Within this perspective, the 2063 Academy believes that young Africans are not only beneficiaries of Agenda 2063 but are active contributors and architects in its development and continue to play an important role in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of Agenda 2063.

Agenda  
**2063**

@ATLAS4DEV  
WWW.ATLAS4DEV.ORG

## THE OPENING SESSION



African Union Commission



Mr. Nomonde Gomphe-Songa  
Facebook's Head of Public Policy,  
Southern Africa Region



AUDA-NEPAD



M. Nabil Barkati  
Chief Programs Officer - Maghreb  
Economic Forum



Ms. Eva Sow Ebiom  
Director of I4Policy and Co-founder of  
Innovation for Policy Foundation





# Combating Shrinking Civic Space: Youth Activism for Inclusive and Democratic Governance

Date: 30 September, 2021

Time: 14 Hours GMT

‘If the youth don't protest, who will?’  
(Woman protesting against the military coup in Myanmar)

[Register via Zoom link below](#)

## Speakers



**Nizar Ben Salah**  
*Maghreb Economic Forum  
(MEF)*



**Rosewita Katsande**  
*Youth Empowerment and  
Transformation Trust (YETT)*



**Ashad Sentongo**  
*Genocide and Atrocity  
Prevention Support (GAPS)*



**Lloyd Pswarayi**  
*Research and Advocacy Unit  
(RAU)*

## Moderator



**Olawale Ismail**  
*Youth Researcher,  
African Leadership Centre (ALC)/  
Kings College London*

## WEBINAR - RESEARCH DISSEMINATION

# COMBATING SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE: YOUTH ACTIVISM FOR INCLUSIVE & DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE.

## INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE: IDRC

“ If the youth don't protest, who will “?

- Woman protesting against the military coup in Myanmar

We took part at the Webinar on Combating Shrinking Civic Space: Youth Activism for Inclusive and Democratic Governance hosted by African Security Sector Network.

In this webinar, we interrogated the shrinkage in civic space that has occurred across much of Africa and its implications for youth activism, development, and inclusion; we also pinpointed three case studies where analysis of youth political activism was incorporated into the research, as the focal point for the broader discussion and lessons learned.



21 OCTOBER 2021 | 4PM CEST

# THE EU GREEN DEAL AND THE MAGHREB COUNTRIES

ORGANISED BY

ISPI



Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
and International Cooperation

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

**POLICY CENTER**  
FOR THE NEW SOUTH  
THINK • STIMULATE • BRIDGE

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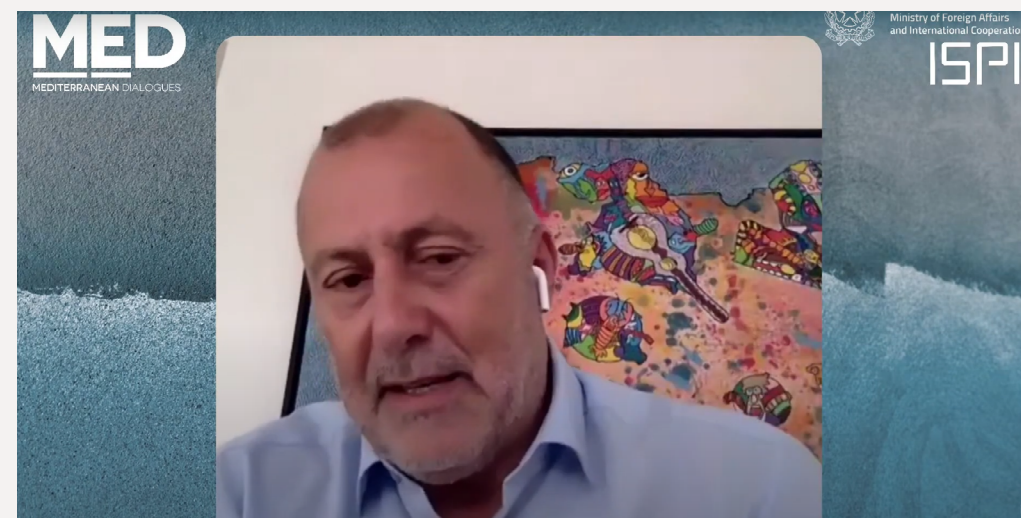
“The Maghreb still has so many issues that Europe has already overcome. Issues that require good infrastructure, qualified human resources, know-how, and funding without compromise on the sovereignty of those countries. This means more political and diplomatic discussions in perspective with the EU.” - SLIM OTHMANI

## WEBINAR

# THE EU GREEN DEAL AND THE MAGHREB COUNTRIES.

## MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE

We were privileged to participate in the webinar on the EU Green Deal and Maghreb countries organized in preparation for the 7th edition of the Rome MED conference which took place from the 2nd to the 4th of December 2021 promoted by the Italian Institute for International Political Studies and the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The Rome MED aims to rethink traditional approaches to the area complementing analyses of current challenges with new ideas and suggestions and drafting a new “positive agenda”, addressing shared challenges at both the regional and the international levels.







## CONFERENCE

# T20 SUMMIT DELIVERING FOR PEOPLE, PLANET, PROSPERITY.

## ITALIAN INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL STUDIES

We were pleased to be invited to participate in the Think20 (T20) Summit T20 Italy 2021 that took place in Milan, Italy on October 4 – 6, 2021. The Italian Institute for International Political Studies – ISPI is the National Coordinator and Chair of the T20 Italy, with the International Affairs Institute as the T20 Co-Chair and Bocconi University as the T20 Summit Co-Chair. During this 3-day event, policymakers and experts discussed multilateral challenges for the G20 Italy and other multilateral fora: vaccines and health, climate and growth, international finance, trade and investments, digitalization, poverty, and inequalities. The discussions featured many high-caliber speakers including Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General, UN United Nations; Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund; Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization; Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; Luigi Di Maio, Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and International Cooperation; Esther Duflo, 2019 Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences and many other esteemed guests.



## CONFERENCE

## GLOBAL THINK TANK SUMMIT.

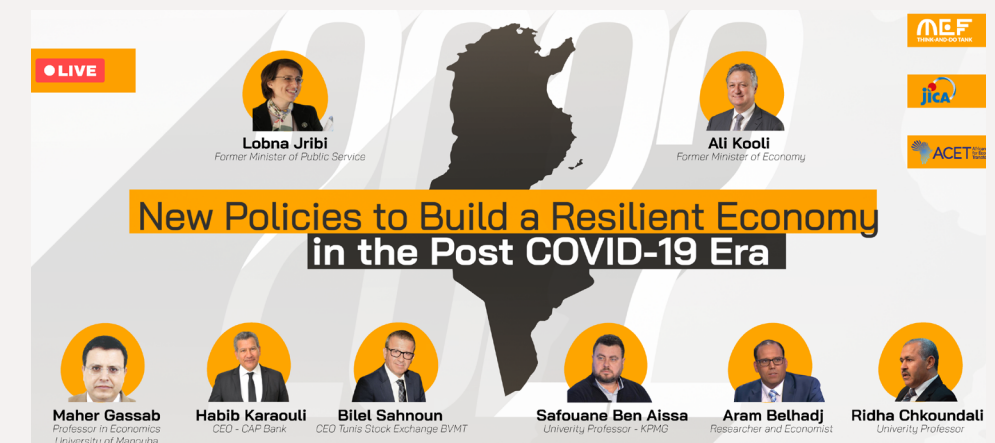
## TTCSP | DERASAT BAHRAIN

The Bahrain Center for Strategic, International & Energy Studies (Derasat) and Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) of the Lauder Institute at the University of Pennsylvania hosted the 2021 Global Think Tank Summit under the theme "Global Trends and Transitions in Think Tanks, Politics and Policy Advice in the Age of Policy Dilemmas and Disruptions". The summit was held December 5th – 7th, 2021 in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The most influential and innovative think tanks from around the world gathered to discuss the responsibilities and capacities of think tanks and research institutes in light of global crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the challenges and opportunities to support stability and recovery.



## RESEARCH

## TRANSFORMING AND BUILDING RESILIENT ECONOMIES IN AFRICA.



## ACET FOR AFRICA

The Government of Japan and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) have been supporting Africa's transformative efforts since Tcad3 in 2003 when the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was agreed upon as the main theme of Africa's development. More specifically, JICA has been taking the lead in initiatives such as: doubling rice production, corridor development, One-Stop Border Posts (OSBP) since the 2000s, and more recently, promoting Japanese business in Africa, digital innovation, start-ups, etc.

While the global COVID-19 pandemic is a crisis it can also offer the opportunity for Africa to "build back better" in the post-COVID-19 era. In this context, ACET (African Center for Economic Transformation) received from JICA the task to carry out policy-oriented research on "New African Policy Agenda" to be discussed with the government of African countries and their development partners.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) facilitated this study as part of a broad research process to support the formulation of a new policy agenda to help Africa realize strong growth recovery while building resilient economies in the post-COVID-19 era. The final report was prepared for discussion at the Eighth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD8) that was held in August 2022 in Tunis, Tunisia.

The Maghreb Economic Forum had the privilege to be assigned to conduct Tunisia's study with consultancy services performed by Prof. Aram Belhadj.

Along with Tunisia, five other country case studies were conducted by policy analysis research institutions and teams of private consultants. They include Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Zambia.



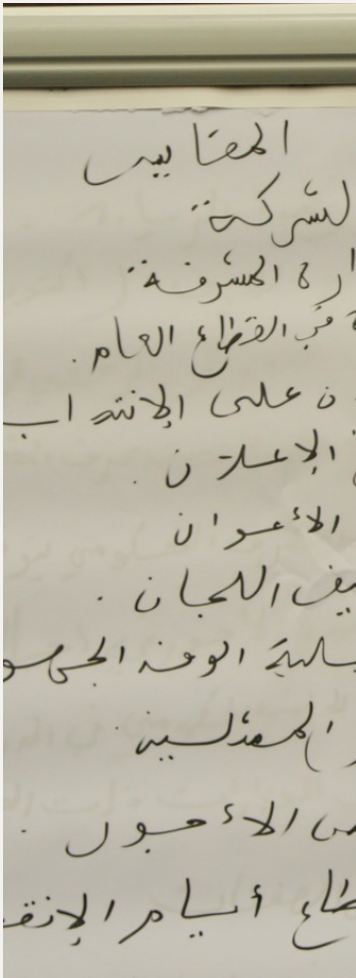
PROJECT

PROMOTING  
ACCOUNTABILITY IN  
SOCIO-ECONOMIC  
POLICIES IN TATAOUINE.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY

MEF held a 4-day workshop for many civil society activists in Tataouine, drawn from a range of groups active in socioeconomic advocacy, that aims to enhance their understanding of the context of the socioeconomic conflicts in Tataouine and the various stakeholders and circumstances. The workshop included sessions on:

- 01. The history of oil and gas production in the region.
- 02. The conflict in 2017 : Background and stakeholders.
- 03. The 1st agreement reached between protestors and the government in 2017.
- 04. An analysis of the reasons for the failure of the first agreement.
- 05. The second agreement of 2020.
- 06. Session on access to open data.
- 07. Data collection methodology.



CONFERENCE

CROSS-COUNTRY  
POLICY LEARNING  
EVENT



ACET FOR AFRICA

On behalf of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET) carried out a policy-oriented research on a New Policy Agenda for Africa (NPA) as part of the process of learning lessons from continental development experiences and as a key input to the 8th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD8) in August 2022. As part of this work, ACET organized case studies in Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tunisia, and Zambia. This research has produced country-specific and cross-country findings and policy recommendations to help African countries transform while building resilient economies in the post-COVID-19 era. These recommendations were discussed at TICAD8, co-organized by the Government of Japan (GOJ), the African Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (UNOSAA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank (WB), and African governments. This cross-country policy learning event convened government policy makers, experts, representatives from the business community and civil society, and development partners from the six countries covered in the report to exchange views and draw lessons to enhance economic transformation and build resilience, centered around the findings of ACET's and partners' research. The discussions during this event provided an opportunity for collective learning, and improve the NPA report.

WEBINAR

# 60 YEARS AFTER INDEPENDENCE: WHAT HAS ALGERIA BECOME?

THE CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY | CMES TUNISIA OFFICE

MEF took part at a webinar exploring the key political, social, economic, and demographic changes that have transformed the largest country in Africa and the Arab world over the past six decades. The webinar was hosted by the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University and co-sponsored by the CMES Tunisia Office.



PROJECT

# BOUNOUD.TN PLATFORM



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY

The Maghreb Economic Forum has launched with the participation of the civil society in Tataouine “Bounoud.tn” Platform. “Bounoud.tn” is a fully integrated, centralized, reliable, and comprehensive online database that maps, analyzes, and assesses the conflict between protesters and the government, and the agreements and promises made by the government related to socio-economic development in Tataouine.

This platform is meant to be an overarching framework aiming to help the various actors involved in this agreement track progress toward its implementation and contribute to creating a context built around transparency and mutual trust.

The Agreement's promises are subdivided into 6 main sections touching upon the environment, plantation, and gardening Company, the investment and development fund of Tataouine, the South Services Company, the employment in oil companies and companies operating in the desert, the stalling projects in Tataouine and finally the settlement of the consequences of El-Kamour movement and its outcomes.

The two other sections investigate the mechanisms of executing this agreement and the method of executing it.



# TACKLING YOUTH RADICALIZATION THROUGH INCLUSION IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY TUNISIA



## RESEARCH

# TACKLING YOUTH RADICALIZATION IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY TUNISIA THROUGH INCLUSION.

### INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE: IDRC

The project undertaken by MEF with support of IDRC is an attempt to gain a better understanding of key factors that drive youth impetus to join violent extremist groups. It is based on direct interaction with a group of Tunisian youth using interviews and focus groups and examines whether radicalized youth have financial difficulties (unemployment, economic exclusion), issues of social support and social recognition (identity crisis, social exclusion), or are culturally marginalized (cultural exclusion).

This document comes to provide the keys to understanding and exploring the radicalization phenomenon which plagues our countries. Intensified by the notion of global village, the loss of identity, the repeated economic crises and their corollary unemployment, the galloping world demography, the clash of civilizations but also that of religions, the growing inequalities, this radicalization finds its source both within our countries and internationally. So many elements that contribute to identity withdrawal and very probably to the rise of violent extremism.



[www.magef.org](http://www.magef.org)

**2021 - 2022**