



Standard Project Report 2015

World Food Programme in Tunisia, Tunisian Republic (TN)

Capacity Development in the Framework of the School Feeding Programme

Reporting period: 1 January - 31 December 2015

Project Information	
Project Number	200493
Project Category	Development Project
Overall Planned Beneficiaries	N/A
Planned Beneficiaries in 2015	N/A
Total Beneficiaries in 2015	N/A

Key Project Dates	
Project Approval Date	December 20, 2012
Planned Start Date	December 01, 2012
Actual Start Date	July 01, 2013
Project End Date	June 30, 2018
Financial Closure Date	N/A

Approved budget in USD	
Food and Related Costs	N/A
Capacity Dev.t and Augmentation	3,350,459
Direct Support Costs	2,724,307
Cash-Based Transfers and Related Costs	N/A
Indirect Support Costs	425,234
Total	6,500,000

Commodities	Metric Tonnes
Planned Commodities in 2015	0
Actual Commodities 2015	0
Total Approved Commodities	N/A

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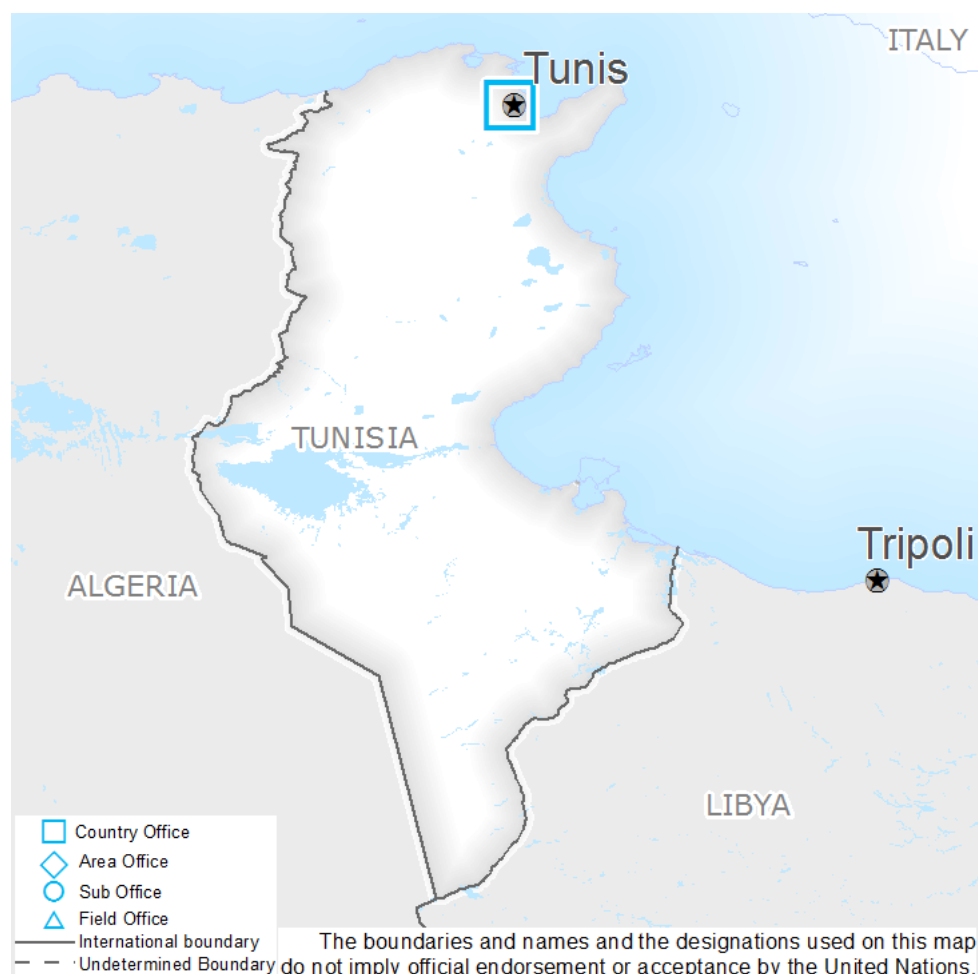
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COUNTRY OVERVIEW



Country Background

Tunisia is undergoing a political, social and economic transition following the January 2011 protests that led to the overthrow of the government and sparked the Arab Spring. Poverty, unemployment and rural inequalities were considered to be the main triggers of the revolution. The 2014 UNDP Human Development Index ranked Tunisia 96 of 188 countries, a fall from its 2013 ranking of 90, and 48 of 155 countries in the Gender Inequality Index.

Following a series of heated debates in the Constituent Assembly, a new constitution was adopted in 2014, which established a decentralized and open government and introduced a target parity between men and women in elected bodies. Parliamentary and presidential elections held between October and December 2014 proved a successful milestone in the democratic transition with the election of the first president under the country's new constitution. In early 2015, the parliament approved a unity government, which is focusing on strengthening its democracy and guaranteeing security while laying the groundwork for a stronger economic recovery.

Tunisia achieved Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1, with significant progress in reducing the percentage of underweight children from 9 percent in 1999 to 3 percent in 2006 (WHO). High unemployment remains one of the country's greatest challenges, with youth unemployment particularly high, currently standing at 30 percent. Tunisia has a total population of 10.8 million, and a GDP per capita of USD 4,300, as per the World Bank 2014. Although importing three quarters of its cereal needs, overall food prices have remained relatively stable. In spite of this, some vulnerable population groups such as the chronically unemployed continue to be affected by food insecurity in the poorest regions of the country: Kairouan, Kasserine, Sidi Bouzid, Beja and Zaghouan.

Primary school enrolment rates are high, with a net enrolment rate (NER) of 99 percent, and of 99.5 percent for children aged 6, which account for the country's virtual achievement of MDG 2, universal primary education. Progress toward MDG 3 was reflected in the significant increase in girls' NER in primary education, from 82 percent in 1990 to 99 percent for the 2014 - 2015 school year. There is an overall larger enrolment of girls than boys in secondary education, due mainly to boys in rural areas having a higher dropout rate. Certain weaknesses remain in terms of the quality of education such as the retention of students as they graduate from primary school to enter middle school. Academic performance remains weak, student achievement is insufficient, and the education is not adequately responsive to the needs of the labour market.

In spite of progress seen towards gender equality, notably in education, there is much to be done to ensure effective equality of opportunity between women and men, in particular with regards to access to revenue generating activities, equal treatment in the labour market, as well as in the empowerment of women in political decision making, from the communal to the national levels.

Summary Of WFP Assistance

On 1 July 2013, WFP began implementing a project on capacity development of school meals in Tunisia with the aim to provide the government with technical assistance to enhance their National School Meals Programme (NSMP), which reaches 240,000 children in 2,500 primary schools. The Development Project 200493 provided technical assistance and policy advice under three main axes: (i) a review of the existing programme; (ii) study visits for South-South cooperation, sharing experiences and best practices; and (iii) development of a sustainable school meals strategy, which was validated in December 2014.

The government requested WFP's continued assistance in a second phase spanning 2015-2018, to provide technical assistance and policy advice to operationalize and implement the strategy. WFP's support aims to strengthen regulatory frameworks and tools; upgrade the current decentralized school meals model; and pilot new implementation modalities that are efficient, accountable, and support local development.

In pilot projects, links are being established with local farmers' groups, especially through rural women's community-based organizations, to promote the use of locally produced foods, foster local development, and empower women in rural communities. School gardens will support nutrition and environmental education, and promote community participation, demonstrating to children and families how to add to and improve a diet with fresh vegetables and fruits.

Gender equality was also fostered through the participation of women in the School Meals Steering Committee and study visit delegations. The project activities contributed to (MDGs) 1, 2 and 3, which were achieved by Tunisia. This Development Project falls under the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF 2015-2019) pillars two and three.

OPERATIONAL SPR

Operational Objectives and Relevance

The technical assistance Development Project 200493 addressed the government's request to establish a partnership with WFP to undertake a comprehensive review of its national school meals programme and to develop a sustainable school meals strategy in line with international standards and best practices.

The project implementation met WFP's Strategic Objective 4 as it supported the government's capacity to administer the school meals activities through close cooperation with the Ministry of Education and local authorities. The technical assistance provided by WFP was aligned with the Tunisian Education Reform of 2002. WFP participated in ongoing discussions expected to result in the launch of education sector reform, to be led by the Ministry of Education and in collaboration with UNICEF.

In addition to its existing partnership with the Ministry of Education, WFP collaborated with the Ministry of Agriculture to enhance links between the national school meals programme and local agricultural production. In turn, this supported the sustainability of school gardens and promoting revenue generating opportunities for rural women's community based organisations.

The expected outcomes of the project were related to the continued improvement of the National Capacity Index (NCI) for School Meals, an indicator which summarises the status of the national school meals programme in accordance with the System Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) tool, which evaluates five standards or policy goals, namely: policy framework, financial capacity, institutional capacity and coordination, design and implementation, and community participation.

Development Project 200493 was aligned with the second and third pillars of the (UNDAF 2015-2019): inclusive, sustainable and resilient economic model; and social protection and equitable access to quality social services.

In line with the government's request, WFP assistance consisted of technical support and capacity development activities and did not include a food assistance component or direct beneficiaries.

Results

Beneficiaries, Targeting and Distribution

The project consisted of technical support and capacity development activities. There were no food entitlements associated with this operation, and therefore no direct beneficiaries. The assistance was organised around WFP's standards for the design and implementation of high-quality sustainable school meals programmes.

Progress Towards Gender Equality

WFP supported the launch of national NGO Femmes Pour les Cantines Scolaires (FCS - Women for School Meals), who received training in programme design and implementation, in particular to foster their role as partners in the implementation of Tunisia's Sustainable School Meals Strategy.

WFP worked in close collaboration with the inter-ministerial National School Meals Steering Committee, and advocated for a gender-equal composition of the committee. Four of the ten acting members in 2015 were women, representing the Ministries of Health, Education, Social Affairs and Foreign Affairs. Project committees will be established in the implementation phase of pilot projects, and will include local community members and local NGO partners at the district level. WFP and its partners will conduct gender and age analyses in target communities, including activity and access and control profiles, in order to design the best strategy to ensure equal participation of men and women on project committees.

The creation of revenue-generating opportunities for rural women constituted an essential component of WFP's multi-dimensional approach to sustainable school meals in Tunisia. The project has focused on the establishment of links between the school meals programme and local farmers' groups, especially through rural women's community-based organizations (CBOs). The objectives were to promote the use of locally produced foods; to foster local development through the creation of a market for local produce in school canteens; and to empower women in rural communities by providing technical assistance to women engaging in agricultural production destined to be

integrated into the school canteen supply chain.

Cross-cutting Indicators	Project End Target	Base Value	Previous Follow-up	Latest Follow-up
Proportion of women beneficiaries in leadership positions of project management committees	>50.00	60.00		
TUNISIA, Capacity Development , Project End Target: 2016.12 , Base value: 2015.12				
Proportion of women project management committee members trained on modalities of food, cash, or voucher distribution	>60.00	60.00		
TUNISIA, Capacity Development , Project End Target: 2016.06 , Base value: 2016.01				

Outputs

A new government was announced in February 2015, after parliamentary and presidential elections. Building on the successful cooperation of the previous year, which resulted in the validation in December 2014 by the National School Meals Steering Committee of Tunisia's Sustainable School Meals Strategy, developed in collaboration with WFP, the newly formed Government of Tunisia requested WFP's continued technical assistance in order to operationalize the implementation of the Sustainable School Meals Strategy over a three year period (2015-2018). In accordance with this request, a budget revision was approved in May extending the project until June 2018, with an updated logical framework tied to the objectives of the Sustainable School Meals Strategy. A new set of indicators was thus developed in order to monitor the project's progress, and target values defined for the project's end date.

Targets were set and baseline values established for the 2015 to 2016 school year for the main quantitative and qualitative improvements called for in the strategy. Starting from 120 feeding days per year, model schools selected by the National School Meals Steering Committee were expected to reach 180 days by the end of the project, with an augmentation to 165 days in the upcoming 2016 to 2017 school year. Moreover, the government decided to augment school meals days in all schools nationwide from 120 in the 2015 to 2016 school year to 165 in 2017 to 2018 school year. This was communicated to the Regional Commissariats for Education through a ministerial note sent in December 2015.

The main government counterpart of WFP's activities was the National School Meals Steering Committee, which was chaired by the Ministry of Education and included representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture, Health, Finance, and Foreign Affairs, and 12 rather than the initially 10 planned government officials. The committee ensured strong inter-ministerial coordination. The salient output in terms of technical assistance activities provided by WFP, the development of a Plan of Action for the implementation of the Sustainable School Meals Strategy was validated by the Steering Committee in November. The Plan of Action detailed the specific actions to be taken and their corresponding timeframes, roles and responsibilities. The content of the Plan of Action drew upon the directions set forth in the strategy, and in the recommendations of an external evaluation of the project which was finalized in July. The Steering Committee members took part in the workshop to present the evaluation's recommendations, providing feedback on the feasibility of recommendations proposed, which allowed for sound, evidence-based decision making on the way forward for the government, WFP and all relevant stakeholders.

The additional technical assistance activity delivered by WFP, which explains the over achievement of this indicator, was the participation of a delegation led by the Chief of Staff of the Ministry of Education in the 2015 Global Child Nutrition Forum (GCNF) in Cape Verde, on Innovative Financing for Nutrition-Based School Meal Programmes, as part of the foreseen South-South cooperation component of the project. The event featured five days of intensive training, technical assistance and planning, directed toward establishing country operated sustainable school meals programmes. The Tunisian delegation was highly involved in forum activities, with the head of the delegation presenting the highlights of the Tunisian experience in the plenary.

Project activities for the operationalization of the Sustainable School Meals Strategy were structured under three components: i) strengthen regulatory frameworks and tools in the areas of governance, targeting, cost efficiency, school meals' nutritional quality and safety, monitoring and evaluation, and community participation; ii) upgrade the current decentralized school meals model in selected schools; and iii) pilot innovative implementation modalities that are efficient, accountable, and support local development. WFP and the government adopted a

multi-dimensional approach for sustainable school meals, which aimed to foster links with local agricultural production; create revenue-generating opportunities for rural women; design nutritious, balanced meals; promote community participation; support nutrition education through school gardens; and strengthen programme governance.

It was agreed with the Ministry of Education that the selected regions for the implementation of pilot projects testing the Strategy's innovative approach would be Béja and Zaghouan. The regions were selected on the basis of their being among the vulnerable, rural areas of the country, but also bearing into mind the potential for replication of the projects: a functional road network, availability of land and water for the implementation of school gardens. Through the pilot projects, WFP and its partners worked to design a school meals approach that will establish links with local farmers' groups, through rural women's community-based organizations. The approach was aimed to promote the use of locally produced foods, foster local development, and empower women in rural communities; as well as to set up school gardens in line with the project's objectives.

Output	Unit	Planned	Actual	% Actual vs. Planned
SO4: Capacity Development - Strengthening National Capacities				
Average number of school feeding days per year in model schools	instance	120	120	100.0
Number of government staff trained by WFP in nutrition programme design, implementation and other nutrition related areas (technical/strategic/managerial)	individual	10	12	120.0
Number of national programmes developed with WFP support (nutrition, school feeding, safety net)	national programme	1	1	100.0
Number of technical assistance activities provided	activity	1	2	200.0

Outcomes

The school meals NCI base value for Tunisia was established after SABER evaluation conducted by WFP in April 2014. The Sustainable School Meals Strategy took notice of this baseline and set forth progress targets, to be measured every two years, for each one of the five SABER school meals standards and policy goals: i) policy framework; ii) financial capacity; iii) institutional capacity and coordination; iv) design and implementation; and v) community participation. Each one of these policy goals were considered in one of the following four stages: latent, emerging, established or advanced. The baseline value for the NCI was 2.2 out of a maximum value of 5.

As per the strategy, the next SABER school meals evaluation is to be conducted in 2016, which will provide the next follow up value of the NCI; this will capture the capacity improvements that were made effective in 2015. As part of their efforts to ensure that target values will be achieved, WFP and the National School Meals Steering Committee developed a Plan of Action for the implementation of the Sustainable School Meals Strategy, which was structured in accordance with the SABER approach, listing out a set of critical activities under each policy goal.

In terms of policy frameworks, the Plan of Action called for the drafting of a national school meals policy, summarizing the main objectives set forth by the strategy, to be used as an instrument to advocate for the improvement of school meals, in the framework of the Education Sector reform launched by the Minister of Education.

The Plan of Action examined the financial capacity and stressed the need to re-evaluate the individual cost per child per meal in accordance with balanced, nutritious meals; as well as to estimate and address the budgetary needs related to the improvement of school canteen infrastructure. WFP and its partners were to support the generation of complementary funding for school meals from the private sector or from local communities.

The institutional capacity and coordination actions included the creation of an Agency of School Works, a new structure within the Ministry of Education to be charged with the management of the national school meals programme. Inter-ministerial coordination and technical meetings with NGO and private sector stakeholders were reinforced, and the dissemination of tools such as nutrition and monitoring and evaluation guidelines at the regional and local level.

The design and implementation section of the Plan of Action highlighted the need to review and validate targeting criteria, and to augment the overall school meals days. The school meals' quality was to be improved through the elaboration and implementation of programme-wide nutrition and safety guidelines. In addition, actions were defined to improve infrastructure, training and foster links between the school canteen and local agricultural production in line with the innovative approaches outlined in the Sustainable School Meals Strategy. A renewed monitoring and evaluation system was to be developed and implemented by 2017, prior to the scaling up of the successful dimensions of pilot experiences, taking into account lessons that will be learned in 2016.

Finally, in terms of community participation, the need to further analyze the capacities and constraints of CBOs to participate in the school meals value chain was noted, resulting in a call for a detailed mapping feasibility study. A framework to regulate local purchases was to be developed, and the creation of school garden associations to ensure their sustainability.

Outcome	Project End Target	Base Value	Previous Follow-up	Latest Follow-up
SO4 Reduce undernutrition and break the intergenerational cycle of hunger				
Ownership and capacity strengthened to reduce undernutrition and increase access to education at regional, national and community levels				
NCI: School Feeding National Capacity Index				
TUNISIA , Project End Target: 2016.12 SABER - SF Workshop , Base value: 2014.04 Joint survey SABER-SF Workshop	=2.80	2.20	-	-

Sustainability, Capacity Development and Handover

WFP has positioned itself as a partner of choice of the Government of Tunisia. Following up on the validation of Tunisia's Sustainable School Meals Strategy, the government requested WFP's continued technical support to provide assistance in the design and implementation of a renewed school meals programme based upon the strategy. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed, extending the provision of technical assistance. The Tunisian NSMP was fully funded by the Government of Tunisia.

A consultative, participatory process led to the development and validation by Tunisia's inter-ministerial School Meals Steering Committee of the Plan of Action for the operationalization of the Sustainable School Meals Strategy. The Plan of Action was created with full national ownership of activities aimed at improving the school meals programme. The Plan of Action called for strengthened collaboration between WFP, civil society and an enhanced Steering Committee, to which the Ministries of Women, Family and Children, and Finance were to be incorporated.

WFP faced the risk of diminished government engagement in capacity development due to the constitution of a new government at the beginning of the year. In order to mitigate the risk, WFP assured key support of the newly appointed Minister of Education, who demonstrated strong commitment to the project's activities and implementation of school meals in general. The regions and schools selected for the pilot projects were defined jointly with the Ministry of Education.

WFP maintained a high level of participation in the discussions leading to the launch of the education sector reform, led by the Ministry of Education, advocating for school meals to play an important part in the discussion. In terms of income transfer, the programme continued providing direct assistance to parents that represented about 10 percent of the yearly income of the poorest decile in rural areas. The school canteen provided a general incentive to reduce school drop-outs, reinforcing the school system's role in promoting social inclusion in Tunisia.

As part of its activities to build national capacity for the improvement of the national school meals programme, WFP established a partnership with and provided training to national NGO, FCS.

In order to enhance nationally-driven sustainability of a renewed school meals programme, WFP and FCS launched an advocacy campaign to advance civil society and private sector involvement in the school meals programme. WFP and FCS led school meals advocacy actions, notably a working lunch held with the private sector and school meals stakeholders. Following this, Tunisian private sector companies made a financial contribution to the Ministry of Education for the infrastructural improvement of selected school canteens.

WFP worked in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture to identify groups of rural women who had received training in various agricultural skills through the Ministry's Technical Extension Centre, to encourage the creation of cooperatives that could develop the capacity to provide home grown school meals in pilot schools.

South-South cooperation was fostered through Tunisia's participation in the GCNF in Cape Verde, where meetings took place with WFP's Centre of Excellence against Hunger to discuss further cooperation in the operationalization of Tunisia's Sustainable School Meals Strategy, and with other heads of delegations, notably of francophone countries, to exchange lessons learned and best practices.

Management

Partnerships

Three strategic objectives were defined by WFP's partners FCS: i) support the Ministry of Education and WFP in the operationalization of the Sustainable School Meals Strategy; ii) build and equip school canteens according to international quality standards; and iii) introduce a supplement to meals served in primary schools. Within the framework of Tunisia's Sustainable School Meals Strategy, FCS carried out activities in the following priority areas: a) fostering links between the school canteen and local agricultural production, in particular through developing and ensuring a viable link with rural women-led CBOs; b) creating and revitalizing school gardens as a means to promote nutrition education and to introduce a complementary source of fresh fruit and vegetables for school canteens; and c) engaging the private sector and civil society in school meals implementation. The first phase of the partnership aimed to accompany the implementation of pilot projects in the governorates of Béja and Zaghouan.

WFP's activities were implemented in partnership with the government, and in particular, with the Ministry of Education and the inter-ministerial National School Meals Steering Committee, which met regularly to oversee project implementation, discuss and endorse the school meals policy and contribute expertise and support as required. This vital partnership ensured that school meals optimization was given the attention and ownership it required in order to motivate governmental staff at the national and local levels, and, therefore, contribute to improved efficiency and effectiveness of the programme and the continued commitment of financing. The project was developed at the strategic and policy level with the government, and at the implementation level with local authorities, communities and school headmasters.

WFP implemented all of its activities with the engagement of the National School Meals Steering Committee and/or FCS acting as complementary partners, thus exceeding the target for this indicator. With regards to infrastructure rehabilitation in selected schools, works had not still begun by the end of 2015. FCS are expected to contribute to these activities by a fundraising campaign in 2016, and WFP is exploring broader partnerships to diversify contributions to school canteen rehabilitation.

WFP partnered with the Ministry of Agriculture to design and implement pilot initiatives linking school meals with local agricultural production. Moreover, the Ministry of Agriculture committed to contribute technically and with other inputs to the revitalization of school gardens. WFP also collaborated with FAO to support the implementation of school gardens and strengthen local farmers' groups.

In close collaboration with UNICEF, WFP maintained its active participation in discussion on the education sector reform, led by the Ministry of Education.

Partnership	NGO		Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement	UN/IO
	National	International		
Total	1			

Cross-cutting Indicators	Project End Target	Latest Follow-up
Number of partner organizations that provide complementary inputs and services	>5.00	2.00
TUNISIA, Capacity Development , Project End Target: 2016.12 , Latest Follow-up: 2015.12		
Proportion of project activities implemented with the engagement of complementary partners	>90.00	100.00
TUNISIA, Capacity Development , Project End Target: 2016.12 , Latest Follow-up: 2015.12		

Cross-cutting Indicators	Project End Target	Latest Follow-up
Share of inputs provided for infrastructure rehabilitation (including canteen, water and sanitation) by local authorities, communities and parents out of total value of costs for infrastructure		
TUNISIA, Capacity Development , Project End Target: 2018.06 , Latest Follow-up: 2015.12	>20.00	0.00

Lessons Learned

The project was the object of an external evaluation in 2015, which linked its findings to future activities through clearly articulated recommendations, including on the project objectives, and allowed evidence-based decision making on the way forward for WFP, the government, and all stakeholders involved in national school meals.

In line with the first recommendation of the evaluation, WFP advocated for the establishment of an extended National School Meals Steering committee, responsible for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Sustainable School Meals Strategy. WFP recommended the inclusion of the Ministries of Development and Finance, and government counterparts suggested the inclusion of the Ministry of Women, Family and Children. According to the recommendation of the external evaluation, the Plan of Action for the implementation of the strategy, which was developed jointly between WFP and the government, called for the formalization of a renewed steering committee in 2015.

Going forward, WFP plans to promote the establishment of a multi-sector and multi-stakeholder technical committee at the regional level, replicating the inclusive approach adopted at the national level. Regional committees were deemed necessary in the pilot regions of Béja and Zaghouan, and identified as a key success factor to introduce innovations to school meals programme design and implementation.

The need to conduct a detailed analysis of funding mechanisms and delays of disbursement of funding to schools, which aimed to identify improved or alternative mechanisms was identified during WFP's review, and reinforced by the evaluation's recommendations. A school meals funding mechanisms and procedures workshop set to take place in the first quarter of 2016, was included in the Plan of Action; with the objective of ensuring that financial flows are streamlined, thus contributing to the optimization of the programme's supply chain.

In terms of the innovations set forth in the strategy aimed at linking school meals with local agricultural production, and, in particular, integrating rural women, WFP and its partners were advised to conduct a detailed analysis of the capacities and constraints of local women producers in order to supply school canteens reliably and cost effectively, and to develop an approach that would support the development of a supply chain based on local production. Experts engaged by WFP and FCS began to work on studies in the pilot regions of Béja and Zaghouan, with preliminary findings showing that local agricultural production would be sufficient to satisfy the procurement needs of the selected school canteens; and identifying potential for rural women to form CBOs aimed at providing nutritious, home grown school meals.

The lack of a network of national NGOs working in school meals resulted in a recommendation to develop a partnership strategy to identify civil society partners who are active in pilot regions for the implementation of the project. WFP accompanied FCS to launch an advocacy campaign and worked jointly for the improvement of the national school meals programme. Furthermore, two additional national NGOs have been identified by WFP for coordination and provision of complementary activities.

The challenge to implement a participatory approach at the local level to promote the involvement of parents and communities in the management of school canteens was addressed by WFP's analysis of the capabilities and constraints of the different stakeholders to participate at the local level, in the framework of the feasibility studies conducted in pilot regions. Following the studies' recommendations, WFP will support the revision of the regulatory framework defining the roles and responsibilities of the community's intervention; an activity that was included in the Plan of Action. In addition, the Plan of Action underscored the need to reinforce the participation of women in the management of school meals, through strengthening the roles of parents and working on the establishment of functional school committees.

Finally, the Plan of Action called for an improved monitoring and evaluation system, in order to measure the results generated in the pilot experiences and focus schools, in order to identify and measure factors of success or failure and draw reliable conclusions about the possibility of replication of the innovations introduced at a larger scale. A reduced Technical Committee was established with the Ministry of Education to ensure follow-up on the detailed actions required to launch the pilot projects in 2016.

The Country Office has mitigated the possibility of compromising programme activities, due to security risk in the field, by proceeding with pilot project implementation in areas that have full access, in line with United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) recommendations.