

## The Flower Project: Fostering local market opportunities for women's empowerment and resilience

### ES.Maroc Association

The FLOWER project began in July 2021 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has made it even more timely and urgent for its goal of supporting women impacted by the health crisis, with the objective of strengthening their socio-economic resilience guided by their own needs.

The main activities carried out during this one-year project were directed towards the consolidation of the cooperatives and female collectives identified in the 7 regions (3 regions in Morocco and 4 regions in Tunisia) through three specific initiatives:

- **Training courses:** financial education and access to public funding, governance, communication, marketing and hygiene of agri-food production
- **Support and local monitoring**
- **Marketing actions:** support for the distribution and implementation of short distribution channels in the target regions

### Project Methodology:

FLOWER was based on a bottom-up approach, involving women active in rural areas and working in agriculture, agri-food and other specific sectors by activating a gradual process of enhancing their economic opportunities, independence, awareness and empowerment.

The project adopted a learning and action-based reinforcement approach, at the level of workshop, trainings, coaching sessions for women's cooperatives, productive groups and for the coaches. The support to the implementation of these collective initiatives was based on the application of the principles and practices of social and solidarity economy.

### Results - FLOWER's outcomes:

The final beneficiaries were rural and urban women active on a national scale and interacting with the target female productive groups of both Morocco and Tunisia that benefit from the progress promoted through the project and from healthy and quality products. The project managed to support and encourage socio-economic development.

- **667 women supported** (37 cooperatives, 33 Agricultural Development Groups - ADG)
- **134 products supported** (74 products in Morocco, 60 products in Tunisia)
- **6 cooperatives and 12 ADG financially supported** to obtain the certification/labels
- **10 new cooperatives created** (84 women)
- **21 individual businesses for 21 women created** and the individual card for entrepreneurs obtained

### And to train:

- **1330 women** (100 cooperatives/ 33 ADG)
- **20 young trainers trained** and who obtained a job offer after the conclusion of the project

### Main results achieved in Morocco

#### For cooperatives

- 100 cooperatives were supported in three Moroccan regions, +1000 women (10 per cooperative) working in the agri-food, craft and cosmetic sectors were trained and 337 of them increased their incomes
- 10 cooperatives were created (84 women) from which 7 are in the fields of valorisation of agri-products, snail

farming, poultry farming, oil production, couscous production in the Rabat-Salé-Kenitra region while the last three focus on e-farming trade, commodity development in Tangiers-Tetouan-Al Hoceima region

- 37 cooperatives were identified and 74 products supported (2 products per cooperative) with access to a national and online distribution channel
- Supporting the cooperatives with improving their packaging, presentation and creating good presentations to insert in the marketplace platform through a photography workshop
- 6 cooperatives were selected and supported to obtain the certificates and labelling
- Organization of the ES.Morocco Job Fair with two editions of the Startup Market in Tangiers (Asilah) and a collaboration with local-national marketplaces to facilitate sells

#### **For entrepreneurs and trainers**

- 21 women were supported in creating their businesses and obtain individual entrepreneur cards
- Women benefited from increased income (+20%), better visibility on the platform and their social media accounts
- 10 young coaches trained and enrolled in jobs after the conclusion of the project

### **Main results achieved in Tunisia**

#### **For Agricultural Development Groups (ADG)**

- -40 ADG supported<sup>1</sup> (20 women per ADG in average were supported, around 800 women)
- 60 ADG-products identified and supported
- Partnership with a digital marketplace<sup>2</sup> that dedicated a whole section of its activities to supported ADG-products and provides pick-up, transport, delivery services and a traffic and sales tracking system to analyze data and performance of products
- COPSE, a partner, committed to follow this platform for a year to support the ADG in case of need
- 12 ADG selected and supported to obtain the labeling/certificates
- Selling spaces set up for direct-digital marketing and development of a collaboration with local and national marketplaces

#### **For trainers**

- 10 young coaches trained and enrolled in a job after the project

#### **Partnerships with long-term added value for countries**

One of the most important elements to consider during this phase are the **partnerships established in both countries.**

**In Morocco**, the partnerships established within the framework of the project allowed to carry out a series of actions with local actors and institutions that will continue beyond the end of the project,

<sup>1</sup> The ADG were supported by putting in place adapted content and realizing three storytellings of flagship products to consolidate their identity

<sup>2</sup> mantouji.online

with clear objectives to support women and young people in terms of empowerment, integration and creation of new jobs. In particular, the association ES.Maroc.org was able to sign an agreement with the Moroccan Office for the Development of Cooperation (ODCO) responsible for supporting cooperatives at the national level and with the town hall of Al Hoceima. It is now in the process of finalizing the formal partnership with the National Office for Agricultural Advice (OAA) and the Tangier - Tetouan - Al Hoceima Chamber of Commerce and Industry. To give visibility to the actions carried out, to the project and to the women several communication campaigns took place during the year which aroused a lot of interest at a national level.

**In Tunisia** the cooperation between women groups through its regional representations, which are the Regional Commissary of Agricultural Development (RCAD) made possible the selection of women's economic collectives to benefit from the spaces and local administrations for the activities and above all to guarantee a follow-up beyond the conclusion of the project.

**In details:**

All actions were directed towards the expected impact and throughout the project, adjustments were made in order to be closer to the needs expressed by women and observed during the support missions.

Throughout the year, all the planned activities have been implemented, starting from a diagnosis of the situation in order to adjust the support mechanisms. Through more than **60 focus groups** (30 for each country) the experts were able to identify the challenges in each country. The diagnosis confirmed the diversity of the regions involved, for which the feminine cooperatives impacted by the pandemic were working in multiple sectors. This activity has led to the evaluation of the need of a technical support for those women who worked in the informal sector, in order for them to obtain the individual entrepreneur card that allows them to start a small business and to achieve financial autonomy.

Given the initial difficulties of moving due to the restrictions of certain regions in Morocco and in Tunisia linked to the pandemic, to the impossibility for some women to move several times in the week and the aim of achieving more engagement from them, the ES.Maroc.org association decided to create an e-learning platform. The platform facilitates the access to training carried out in the framework of the FLOWER project. The link was shared with Tunisian partners and some rural women followed some training sessions.

**In Morocco** the cooperatives implicated in the project FLOWER had the opportunity to participate in the ES.Maroc Job Fair organized by ES.Maroc.org and other local partners. It took place online from 16 to 18 December 2021 and received 750 visitors in 3 days. A series of **coaching sessions** were organized to create synergies between cooperatives and to strengthen skills. This pilot initiative has been a success not only for the cooperatives but also for the city of Tangier which has never hosted an event of this kind to enhance the local products of start-ups and cooperatives. In addition, the Regional Youth Directorate appreciated it so much that it has decided to promote the initiative and ensure that it is organized at a local level at least once every two or three months, with the aim of making it a regular event in the region.

**In Tunisia**, after a consultation with the various stakeholders, the partner COSPE implemented two actions with local partners:

- **A joint sales space in Mahdia:** a mobile space in the form of a site made available free of charge by the municipality, in partnership with the women's delegation and CRDA allowing all women to exhibit their products once a month in the city center. This experience was a great success and will be renewed every 3 months, depending on the products and seasonality.
- **A space for exhibitions, sales and exchanges** between ADG Sidi Bouzid and

Kasserine, the experiment was conducted with the partnership of two local associations to create marketing opportunities but also networking, training and exchanges.

Both experiments were successful on several levels: by promoting sales and marketing exercise for women, by mobilizing the community especially in a space for exchanges like the City Center and some additional sales were made.

Furthermore, in order to strengthen knowledge and awareness related to hygiene, **a guide to good health practices** (food, production and distribution) was developed by a Tunisian expert involving both countries and translated into French and Arabic to be disseminated at the level of women's cooperatives, production groups and farmers in targeted regions, but also to the local partners (institutions, associations) to make information accessible to other cooperatives and women.

---

**The ES.Maroc.org association** is based in Morocco and promotes social innovation with an incubator completely dedicated to the support of social enterprises with innovative services and high impact and sustainability for their communities. Through a complete program of tailored support, advice, training and knowledge-sharing entrepreneurs are allowed to give life to their biggest ambitions and projects. The objective is to create sustainable and responsible companies to energize the national territory by reinforcing the local social cohesion and creating job opportunities.