

## NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON THE SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM IN TUNISIA

January 24-25, 2022 – (Virtual Meeting)

15:00-17:30 Tunis time

Registration Link [here](#)

### CONTEXT

Tunisia is considered among the countries with the most comprehensive social protection system in the MENA region, with its large contributory and non-contributory schemes. Tunisia has historically been a leader in the region in social protection for women, labor protections, and more recently pluralistic democracy. However more than 44% of the working population were still outside the social protection systems in 2019 and there remain entrenched geographic inequalities between the coast and the interior, as well as ill-targeted social spending.

Moreover, the health crisis of COVID-19 has exposed the current limitations of the social protection system despite the government deployment since the beginning of the crisis of eight urgent measures (2 contributory and 6 non-contributory) to mitigate the socio-economic and health impacts of the crisis.

With the adoption of the new constitution of 2014 Tunisia had embarked on reforms to better extend the coverage of programs especially to categories not yet covered and, more specifically, to active people in the informal economy. The country must also account for the challenges faced by the social protection system such as the performance and the targeting quality of non-contributory programs, inequality of access to care services, the problem of financial imbalance of funds and the exclusion of some vulnerable categories from the social protection system.

As part of the project "Reimagining Social Protection in Jordan and Tunisia" two national consultations were organized in January and September 2021 around the social protection system in Tunisia. These events brought together social protection experts, academics and civil society actors to discuss the different schemes and programs, the limitations of this system especially in the face of the health crisis, identify key challenges and suggest practical recommendations.

This two-day national dialogue workshop is intended as an opportunity for dialogue between the various actors of civil society, policy makers, politicians and experts:

- ✓ To discuss the different parts of the landscape of social protection in Tunisia including contributory and non-contributory pensions, cash transfers, unemployment insurance, provisions for maternity and other leaves, childcare, livelihood support, health care, education, housing support and provision, and subsidies for energy or food,
- ✓ To compare the substantial efforts of Tunisia and Jordan in providing more inclusive social protection especially regarding the role of civil society in the absence of a clear social contract and

- ✓ To better reflect on the reforms and measures needed for a more inclusive social protection.

The discussion will be based on six draft papers:

- Landscape of Social Protection in Tunisia
- Health Insurance and Health Outcomes in Tunisia
- Social Security Coverage and Informal Employment in Tunisia
- Cash Assistance Targeting Those in Poverty in Tunisia
- Minimum and Living Wages in Jordan and Tunisia
- The Role of Civil Society in Promoting Social Protection Reforms: A Comparative Study Between Jordan and Tunisia

### **DIALOGUE OBJECTIVES**

The national dialogue workshop will be an opportunity for experts, civil society representatives and policy makers to:

1. Exchange on the outputs of the different papers on the current state of social protection system in Tunisia
2. Discuss the main challenges of the current social protection system in general and more specifically regarding health insurance and outcomes, social protection extension strategies for informal workers, minimum and living wages, health insurance, and targeting cash assistance
3. Discuss the role of civil society in promoting social protection reforms based on a comparative analysis between Tunisia and Jordan.
4. Discuss the main policy recommendations
5. Determine the main priorities in terms of reforms for a more inclusive social protection system in Tunisia.

### **DIALOGUE ORGANIZATION**

The time allocated for the presentation of each paper is 25 minutes and the feedback from a dedicated discussant will be 10 minutes, and 10 minutes for questions from the floor.

## AGENDA

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<b>Day One: Monday, January 24, 2022</b>	
15:00-15:10	<p><b>Welcome Remarks, Framing of the Workshop and Objectives</b></p> <p>Dr. Ibrahim Elbadawi; <i>Economic Research Forum</i>            Dr. Ragui Assaad; <i>University of Minnesota and ERF: Overview of the project and its progress</i>            Ms. Asma Ben Hassen; <i>Tunisia Inclusive Labor Institute (TILI): Presentation of the workshop objectives</i></p>
15:10-15:55	<p><b>Session 1: Landscape of Social Protection in Tunisia</b>            Imane Helmy, Mohamed Amara, and Khaled Nasri</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> M. Housseem Belhaj (Development Expert )</p> <p><b>Discussants:</b> Mr. Khaled Sdiri (<i>Expert at the UGTT</i>)            Ms. Nahed Snoussi (<i>President of Business Women League at the UNFT</i>)</p>
15 :55-16 :40	<p><b>Session 2: Health Insurance and Health Outcomes in Tunisia</b>            Mohamed Ali Marouani, Nidhal Ben Cheikh, and Phuong Minh Le</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Mr. Housseem Belhaj (Development expert)</p> <p><b>Discussant:</b> Mr. Naoufel Labiadh (<i>Health expert and member of the National Observatory of Social Security</i>)</p>
16:40-17:25	<p><b>Session 3: Extending Social Protection to Informal Workers in Tunisia</b>            Najat El Mekaoui, Yeganeh FOUFOUHESHFAR, Asma Ben Hassen, Jacob Emont, and Nidhal Ben Cheikh</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Mr. Housseem Belhaj (Development Expert)</p> <p><b>Discussant:</b> Mme. Mouna Ben Othman (<i>Economist, Tunisian Organization of Social Cohesion</i>)</p>

<b>Day two: Tuesday, January 25, 2022</b>	
15:00-15:05	<b>Welcome Remarks</b>
15:05-15:50	<p><b>Session 1: Cash Assistance Targeting Those in Poverty in Tunisia</b> Imane Helmy, Mohamed Amara, and Khaled Nasri</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Mr Housseem Belhaj (Development Expert ) <b>Discussant:</b> Mr. Chafik Ben Rouine (<i>President of the Tunisian Observatory of Economy</i>)</p>
15:50- 16:35	<p><b>Session 2: Minimum and Living Wages in Jordan and Tunisia</b> Caroline Kraft and Cyrine Hannafi</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Mr. Housseem Belhaj ( Development Expert ) <b>Discussant:</b> Ms. Afef Daoued (<i>Former Advisor at the Ministry of Social Affairs</i>)</p>
16:35- 17:20	<p><b>Session 3: The Role of Civil Society in Promoting Social Protection Reforms in Tunisia and Jordan</b> Ahmed Awad, Courtney Geary, Asma Ben Hassen, and Arbia Saleh</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Mr. Housseem Belhaj ( Development Expert) <b>Discussant:</b> Mr. Mounir Hassine (<i>President of the Tunisian Forum of Social and Economic Rights, section of Monastir FTDES</i>)</p>
17:20-17:30	<p><b>Closing workshop and Next Steps:</b> Dr. Ragui Assaad, <i>University of Minnesota and ERF</i></p>