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Swiss Cooperation Strategy North Africa 2017–20

For a peaceful, stable and
prosperous future



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
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Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

Switzerland's engagement in North Africa

Since when? Switzerland has been committed to supporting the people of North Africa since the 2011 uprisings.

How? Switzerland contributes both financially and with know-how to projects that promote peace, democracy, human rights, economic development and employment. Migration and protection are another focus of Switzerland's work in North Africa.

Why? As Europe's southern neighbour, North Africa is of particular importance to Switzerland. Contributing to building a peaceful region in which all citizens benefit from accountable and transparent institutions, economic growth and prosperity is the aim of our engagement.



Why Switzerland remains committed

North Africa has experienced unprecedented changes since the 2011 uprisings. While each of the countries in the region has its own issues, all face similar challenges.

- **Unemployment is high.** Youth unemployment stands at around 29% while the overall unemployment rate among women is about 20%. Even though many people are well educated, their skills do not match those required by the job market.
- **Economic growth is slow.** The economy has been in a critical situation since the uprisings of 2011; growing budget deficits and falling income from tourism have led to a spike in inflation. Competition rather than cooperation is the norm among the region's economies.

- **The situation is fragile.** The region is affected by conflicts, restrictions on civil society, and violations of international humanitarian law and human rights. Large parts of the population are excluded from social, political and cultural life.
- **Migration poses challenges.** While the numbers have fluctuated in recent years, refugees and migrants continue to settle in North Africa or to use North Africa as a point of departure to seek protection or better opportunities in Europe.



The three pillars of Switzerland's strategy

Between 2017 and 2020, Switzerland is investing CHF 260 million in regional and national projects in Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco and Libya.

The projects draw on the specific expertise of different Swiss government actors: the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Human Security Division (HSD) of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), and the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM).

Switzerland works closely with national authorities, Swiss, local and international organisations, and private sector actors with experience in the project areas and the region.

Democratic transition and human rights

Switzerland promotes peace, the rule of law, and accountable and transparent institutions. To this end, the projects foster human rights, strengthen civil society and political participation in North Africa.

- In Algeria, Switzerland supports the National Council for Human Rights (CNDH). The council monitors human rights, issues early alert warnings in situations that may lead to violations and takes preventive measures. The aim is to improve the documentation of human rights violations and to make the handling of complaints more efficient.
- In Tunisia, one project focuses on identifying the causes of violent extremism and taking concrete steps to prevent it. The project brings together state security actors and civil society to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the state's work and to make it more accountable to the public.



Economic growth and employment

Switzerland's support focuses on achieving an economic growth that ensures equality of opportunities for all. Given the high unemployment rates among young people, improving their employability is a priority.

- In Tunisia, a project provides vocational training and on-the-job work experience. Young job seekers can acquire the skills they need to find work. More than 80% of the young men and women who have participated in this programme have subsequently found work on the job market.

- In Morocco and Tunisia, Swiss projects improve the performance, market access and socio-economic conditions of operators in the production of harissa chilli paste, the Tunisian Djebba fig and Moroccan argan oil. Thanks to the project, women in particular have found employment both in production and in agro-tourism. The introduction of a national competition, based on a successful Swiss model, has further boosted these agricultural sectors.



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Migration and protection

North African countries are located close to both Europe and to areas experiencing conflict, instability and poverty. For this reason, they have become points of origin and transit for migration and host states for refugees. Switzerland works with national authorities and international and local organisations to develop national policies and to promote the rights of migrants and refugees. Assisting the most vulnerable migrants and refugees, including victims of human trafficking, is another focus of our engagement.

- In Libya, Switzerland supports the activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), including the provision of food, water, shelter, medical and psychosocial assistance. The ICRC also works to ensure that the rights of refugees and other migrants, including those who have been detained, are protected in accordance with international humanitarian law.

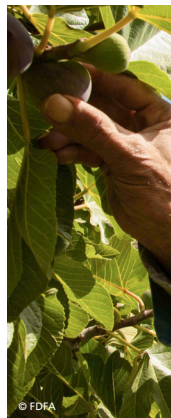
- In Tunisia, as part of the migration partnership concluded with the country in 2012, Switzerland helps address various challenges posed by migration. For instance, Switzerland assists the Tunisian authorities in strengthening their asylum system. The aim is to improve their ability to handle the influx of refugees and other migrants with the help of a new asylum law.
- In Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, community based organisations meet the essential needs of refugees and other migrants. These include child and adult education, emergency assistance, and medical and legal services. The projects strengthen the ability of these organisations to provide these much-needed services.



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Regional project: Culture

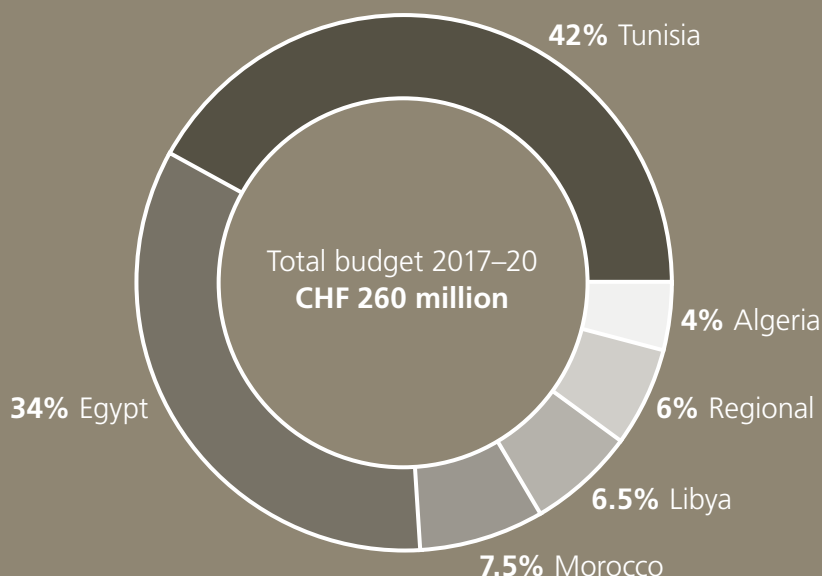
To foster regional cooperation in North Africa, Switzerland supports regional projects in the areas of migration, civil society, economic integration and culture.

A regional project provides the means to create joint cultural productions and to ensure their distribution to audiences across the region.

The Cultural Programme for North Africa strengthens exchanges within and between the countries of the region and contributes to intercultural dialogue. This is of vital importance for the cohesion of the region. The programme also contributes to the political transition process, creates opportunities for economic development and offers young people real alternatives to irregular migration and violent extremism.



Switzerland's North Africa commitment in numbers



Further information and links:

FDFA thematic page North Africa

www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/countries/north-africa.html

SECO Economic Cooperation and Development

www.seco-cooperation.admin.ch/secocoop/en/home.html

In-country support, SEM

www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/internationales/international-zusarbeit/hilfe-vor-ort.html

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