

Background and Purpose

Throughout the last few years, different government officials, media figures and ordinary citizens have increasingly referred to “stability” as a pressing need for the Egyptian society. Societal stability is based on a consensus among all relevant stakeholders, namely the government, democratic trade unions and the business sector. Such consensus can be reached only if the three aforementioned parties are empowered and able to engage in a constructive process of social dialogue.

In theory, social dialogue is a tripartite dialogue, involving democratic trade unions that cater genuinely to the interests of workers, the business community representing the employers, and the government as a mediator. The objective is to reach societal consensus over issues of great concern to the community, thus ensuring social, economic and political stability.

In reality, social dialogue was artificially convened in Egypt for decades, involving a pro-government trade-union structure, namely the Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF), the semi-governmental Egyptian Federation for Industries, and the government itself, represented by the Ministry of Labor – a pure governmental tripartite, rather than a dialogue involving the society.



Accordingly, this project aims at bringing into reality a genuine tripartite dialogue between independent and democratic trade unions, business communities free of governmental influences, and government representation trying to mediate, not to dictate – in short: a true and genuine social dialogue based on mutual interests of social partners and within societal concern.

Duration and Phases

The project will be implemented in the cities of the Suez Canal region, which is likely to witness a significant rise in investment rates and consequently many labor-related concerns are likely to come to the surface. For practical reasons, the project will focus on one governorate of the Suez Canal region per year, thus covering the entire region within a time-frame of three years.

The project will be divided into three phases.

In a first phase, training programs will be held for each of the three target groups individually:

- Independent trade unions will attend two levels of training; the first will introduce them to the main concepts of social dialogue while the second will train selected union representatives to become negotiators.
- Business sector representatives will be trained on the main concepts of social dialogue and its importance for the stability and profitability of their businesses.
- Government representatives will be trained on the main concepts of social dialogue in an attempt to empower them to become successful mediators between the business sector and the workers / trade unions.

In a second phase, independent trade unions will receive consultancy on how to initiate social dialogue with social partners, how to set the dialogue topics, and how to conduct a result-oriented process of social dialogue.

In a third phase, the most important topics for social dialogue will be brought up in round-table discussions involving all three parties, thus putting in practice genuine social dialogue sessions.

In addition, a publication on social dialogue concepts is planned, targeting the three target groups of the project.

Target groups

- Members of different independent trade-union structures in the Suez Canal region.
- Members of business associations in the Suez Canal region.
- Staff of the Department of Collective Bargaining and Social Dialogue of the Ministry of Labor.

Partners

- Selected independent trade-unions structures in each governorate of the Suez Canal region.
- Selected business associations in each governorate of the Suez Canal region.
- Ministry of Labor.

Phase	Time / Period	Step / Activity	Result and Use
Training	Feb.-July	8 training programs for TU members on basic concept and procedures of social dialogue	Workers are more aware of the concept, and willing to engage in negotiations
	July	2 focused training of trainers (ToT) - programs on negotiations skills	A reasonable number of qualified negotiators to handle collective bargaining and social dialogue events is available
	May-June	2 training program for businessmen on social dialogue	Businessmen are aware of the concept and benefits of reaching consensus with workers and the government
	June	1 training program for government representatives at the Dpt. of Collective Bargaining and Social Dialogue in the Ministry of Labor	Government officials responsible for social dialogue are aware of their role as mediators in the process
Consultancy	Sept.-Nov.	2 consultations on initiating social dialogue sessions	Sessions on social dialogue are successfully convened in Suez governorate
Round-table discussions	Sept.-Nov.	Convening a number of actual social dialogue sessions including the three parties of the tripartite	