



DEMAC

DIASPORA  
EMERGENCY ACTION  
& COORDINATION

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DIASPORA  
ORGANIZATIONS  
AND THEIR  
HUMANITARIAN  
RESPONSE IN  
TUNISIA  
REAL-TIME REVIEW

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**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The DEMAC and Owl RE research teams would like to thank the members of diaspora communities in Tunisia and across the world, as well as the representatives of donors, NGOs, government officials, and other actors who dedicated their time providing information and sharing their valuable knowledge and experiences.

This real-time review is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of the Danish Refugee Council on behalf of DEMAC and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Real-time review conducted between July and September 2021

Published in January 2022

# ABOUT DEMAC

The mission of DEMAC is two-fold:

- 1) to enable inclusive coordination and collaboration among diaspora organizations providing humanitarian assistance, and across diaspora organizations and institutional humanitarian actors, and
- 2) to facilitate higher levels of engagement and visibility for diaspora organizations in the humanitarian system.

The objective is to contribute to transforming the humanitarian eco-system by laying the groundwork for a deeper understanding of diasporas as humanitarian actor groups with different modus operandi for the implementation of aid in practice, identifying and opening potential spaces for engagement and cross-fertilization, and improving coordination between diaspora and institutional relief providers.

# DEMAC AIMS AT

01

Enhancing knowledge  
between diasporas  
and humanitarian  
institutions

02

Increasing awareness  
on diasporas'  
humanitarian  
interventions

03

Improving coordination  
communication and  
coherence of  
humanitarian response

# WHY DIASPORA?

Work with diasporas has shown that diaspora organizations are multi-sectoral, fast responding actors who work transnationally, including in countries facing humanitarian crises. Having a connection with and understanding of their country of origin or heritage plays a vital role in humanitarian assistance where diaspora organizations often are part of the first response in the aftermath of a disaster.

Diaspora are also key actors when it comes to raising the alarm in times of crisis. The ease and frequency of communication between local communities and diaspora organizations means that they can be alerted in real-time, and their capacity to collect and disperse funds rapidly ensures that they are a key factor in unlocking the first responses in crisis settings. In hard-to-reach places where access may be an issue, diaspora organizations have a unique advantage due to their local connections and ties. They use their transnational position to respond to the growing demands for remote management and cross-border response in countries where international actors have a limited presence, and to advocate on behalf of crisis affected populations in the policy arenas of their countries and regions of residence.

Supporting diaspora as part of a broader humanitarian ecosystem to play a key role in humanitarian responses and provide vital support to communities in countries of origin contributes to the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of humanitarian responses. In light of their transnational identity and close local ties, it is also strongly linked to the localization agenda, one of the main commitments under the Grand Bargain. Localization aims to strengthen the resilience of local communities and to support local and national responders on the front line. UNOCHA has called furthermore, for an indispensable opening of the resource base of humanitarian action by integrating 'non-traditional actors' - such as diasporas - to enhance the effectiveness of the humanitarian response and render it interoperable.

Diaspora organizations are part of and play a central role in localization. Many can be considered front-line responders themselves, making direct and concrete contributions to emergency responses in their home countries. Others work closely with local authorities, local organizations and community groups, providing technical and financial support, playing a role in advocacy and linking local actors with additional sources of support.

Diaspora organizations are heterogeneous – they have different capacities, values and approaches and as part of a broader humanitarian community can play a valuable and agile role in humanitarian responses. However, assistance provided by diaspora organizations and the formal humanitarian actors often follow parallel tracks, resulting in a lack of mutual understanding and recognition, and thus a lack of coordination and collaboration that would be of benefit to the overall response.

# WHAT NOW?

Building on expertise gained since its inception in 2015, DEMAC is further consolidating itself as a permanent platform – a one-stop-shop – for enhancing mutual knowledge and coordination between diaspora humanitarian actors and the international humanitarian system.

DEMAC's work has been a key factor behind stronger representation and visibility of diaspora organizations in the humanitarian eco-system – a first and core example hereof being the coordination of joint messaging and participation of diasporas as a stakeholder group to the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 2016, which was a key factor to putting diaspora humanitarianism on the map.

DEMAC has also piloted concrete liaison structures between diaspora and institutional humanitarian actors towards improving operational coordination in specific crisis settings. Another core contribution to the role of diaspora humanitarianism has been continuous knowledge development: DEMAC has conducted a number of studies aiming to increase understanding of motivations and modus operandi of diaspora humanitarian engagement, replacing assumptions with evidence on diaspora contribution.

Building on these experiences and the past and present research, DEMAC will develop an operational framework for diaspora and humanitarian actors, to improve future responses to humanitarian emergencies. Through the development of a standardized approach for the international humanitarian system to assess and document the role and impact of diaspora in selected emergency responses, DEMAC will enhance the knowledge and awareness of the nature and significance of the diaspora followed by the facilitation of internal discussions on how the system could and should relate to and coordinate with diaspora emergency actors. Furthermore, DEMAC will use the documentation from selected diaspora emergency responses to engage with diaspora humanitarian actors to enhance the generation of lessons learned and self-reflections from diaspora-led emergency responses with a view to adjust their approach and discuss how to engage with the international humanitarian system.

DEMAC will develop guidelines, tools and resources in support of diaspora emergency engagement, with a view to remain prepared to support diaspora organizations' engagement in new emergency responses and facilitate coordination among responding diaspora organizations and between diaspora organizations and the humanitarian system.

Finally, DEMAC will enhance the knowledge among diaspora organizations about the humanitarian system to enhance probabilities of coordination between the two.

DEMAC is currently working with multiple emergency-prone focus countries, while at the same time remaining prepared to engage with and support diaspora from additional countries should a humanitarian crisis unfold in their country of origin.

## Acronyms and abbreviations

ACTS	L'Association des Compétences Tunisiennes en Suisse (Association of Tunisian Skills in Switzerland)
ASSEN	L'Association de Soutien aux Enfants (Association to Support Children)
ATI	Associazione dei Tunisini in Italia (Association of Tunisians in Italy)
ATUGE	L'Association des Tunisiens des Grandes Ecoles (Association of Tunisians of Higher Education Institutions)
CSO	Civil society organization
DEMAC	Diaspora Emergency Action & Coordination
EU	European Union
INGO	International non-governmental organization
MoH	Ministry of Health (Tunisia)
NCRA	National Coronavirus Response Authority (Tunisia)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OTE	Office des Tunisiens à l'Étranger (Office of Tunisians Abroad)
PPE	Personal protective equipment
TAYP	Tunisian American Young Professionals
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acronyms and abbreviations	8
Executive Summary	10
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>2. Methodology</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>3. Context</b>	<b>20</b>
3.1. Humanitarian crisis under review	20
3.2. Actors and coordination	21
<b>4. Diaspora humanitarian response</b>	<b>26</b>
4.1. The Tunisian diaspora	26
4.2. Diaspora organization profiles	27
4.3. Motivation to respond	31
4.4. How did diaspora organizations respond?	32
4.5. Funding for the diaspora organization response	34
4.6. Implementation modalities and recipient selection	35
4.7. Coordination modalities	39
<b>5. Challenges in the diaspora humanitarian response</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>6. Future diaspora humanitarian response and engagement</b>	<b>44</b>
Annex A - Mapping of diaspora organizations	48
Annex B - Table of people interviewed	53

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**This real-time review is part of the Diaspora Emergency Action & Coordination initiative's (DEMAC) "Research study on diaspora humanitarian response and engagement".**

The review focuses on the period from July 2021 to September 2021, providing a rapid analysis of the humanitarian response of Tunisian diaspora organizations to the fourth and most severe wave of the COVID-19 pandemic with reference to the previous waves in 2020 and 2021 when diaspora organizations were also active.

Although Tunisia coped well in responding to the first waves of COVID-19, the situation deteriorated dramatically with the fourth wave which struck in July 2021, with Tunisia reporting the highest number of deaths per capita from COVID-19 in the Middle East and Africa. Facing a stark change of fortunes from the initial optimism of early 2020, government authorities, the media and civil society sounded the alarm, calling for external support from neighbors and allies, donor governments, the United Nation (UN) system, international actors – and the diaspora.

The government of Tunisia acted quickly in March 2020 to establish a cross-ministerial committee, the National Coronavirus Response Authority (NCRA), which coordinated measures on COVID-19 between the different ministries and institutions, including the country's 24 governorates. The Ministry of Health (MoH) and its network of hospitals and health clinics were at the frontline of the health response to COVID-19. Organizations including the Tunisian Red Crescent Society, Tunisian Scouts, grassroots organizations, UN agencies and international non-governmental organizations worked to support the government's efforts. The government authorities also identified the skills and resources of the Tunisian diaspora as important for the COVID-19 response, asking Tunisian doctors living abroad to consider returning to the country temporarily to help. In July 2021, The Tunisian Embassy in Paris launched a direct appeal to diaspora asking them to contribute financial donations or in-kind medical equipment and materials.

The research team undertook an initial desk review to map the structures and activities of 24 diaspora organizations involved in the COVID-19 response. This was followed by semi-structured interviews with representatives of diaspora organizations, the Tunisian Red Crescent Society, national authorities, and a hospital, totaling 15 people in all. Of the 24 diaspora organizations mapped for this review that carried out a COVID-19 response, the majority were based in Europe. Many of the diaspora organizations were established by groups of Tunisian students and/or professionals for their social and professional development. Although the organizations had limited experience in humanitarian response, some organizations had been set up prior to the COVID-19 pandemic to support the most vulnerable in Tunisia. All diaspora organizations were managed and governed by volunteers with only a few having permanent staff and a presence in Tunisia, where most were supported by volunteers and/or local civil society partners.

With most Tunisian diaspora based in Europe, they knew first-hand of the risks and spread of COVID-19 before it became widespread in Tunisia. Consequently, Tunisian diaspora acted early to support their homeland. The diaspora recognized the challenges for the authorities to manage the overwhelming needs of the COVID-19 response and this was a major motivation for their own actions, in addition to the direct appeals of the government authorities.

In response to the fourth wave, the diaspora organizations were mainly focused on the urgent medical requirements of hospitals and other health services in Tunisia, setting up fundraising campaigns, often in coalitions, to fund the purchase of medical equipment and supplies for the COVID-19 response. Several organizations were also active in supporting vulnerable groups in Tunisia, via distributing food and hygiene kits for example, while others focused on informing and educating Tunisians about COVID-19. Diaspora organizations also sought to contribute to the COVID-19 recovery of Tunisia.



Funding for the diaspora COVID-19 response was mostly from what diaspora supporters raised through the websites of diaspora organizations, social media and crowdfunding platforms. The funds raised by diaspora organizations ranged from relatively small (USD 3,000) to quite significant (USD 230,000).

To coordinate the COVID-19 response, the MoH established a special commission to determine the needs of the hospitals and other medical establishments, to then communicate these needs to the diaspora organizations and organize the reception of donated or purchased goods in Tunisia. On this basis, the diaspora organizations established what were the most urgent needs while complementing this with information from their own contacts and networks in Tunisia. Once the equipment and materials were either purchased in Tunisia or had passed through customs, they were then dispatched directly to the hospitals and establishments. The diaspora organizations interviewed did not have any established accountability or reporting mechanisms, but the majority did use social media and their websites to provide photos, video testimonies and updates of the various steps of delivering the medical equipment and supplies, in addition to holding webinars to discuss the situation in Tunisia and their various COVID-19 responses.

Diaspora organizations also reported that their civil society partners or volunteers carried out follow-up visits to the hospitals some three months after the deliveries to observe how the equipment and materials were being used.

No diaspora organization reported collaborating with any UN agency or any other institutional humanitarian organization working in Tunisia, as they saw the MoH, medical establishments and local CSOs as the most well-situated partners for their COVID-19 response. Although many of the diaspora organizations did collaborate in organizing joint fundraising campaigns and responses, no coordination was observed between diaspora organizations and their coalitions for their COVID-19 response in Tunisia. Diaspora organizations highlighted a number of challenges that they faced in engaging in the COVID-19 response, including difficulties to raise the funds needed; securing enough volunteers to support the fundraising drives and coordination work; having sufficient information from the different structures in Tunisia; balancing the need to coordinate and validate the COVID-19 response with their governance (boards) against the need for rapidity of the response; lacking know-how and staff for carrying out humanitarian response, including selection criteria, communication and coordination; as well as processing of the purchased and donated equipment once it arrived in Tunisia.

Some initial actions which could be considered to develop and strengthen the engagement of diaspora organizations during future humanitarian crises and in the COVID-19 recovery in Tunisia include:

- Build upon the positive example of Tunisian diaspora organizations working together, and with authorities and civil society organizations (CSOs) to develop longer-term partnerships. For example, this could be achieved through the launch of calls for development and/or humanitarian projects that require coalitions of organizations for implementation.
- Explore initiatives to further develop diaspora organizations' expertise. Based on their experience of COVID-19, the diaspora organizations have an interest and potential to be further involved in humanitarian response, even if their normal areas of interventions are not directly dedicated to humanitarian work.
- Get diaspora organizations further involved in the support to Tunisia in the COVID-19 recovery, as they have already demonstrated their abilities, and could further be involved given their strong professional expertise in many key areas, such as health, information technology, entrepreneurship, etc.
- In general, the diaspora organizations would benefit from strengthened internal structures. The management of projects and their follow-up can only achieve the strategic goals of an association with a clear structure and support (i.e. board, executive team, projects officers). Diaspora organizations could further explore the professionalization of their organizations within their possible means.
- Use this opportunity for DEMAC to mobilize its expertise in support of the diaspora organizations in lessons learned exercises. Although there have been coalitions created and collaboration between diaspora organizations in the COVID-19 response, there is no initiative for any debriefing exercises on lessons learned to gather together the involved diaspora organizations for collective reflection.
- As the first direct partner of the diaspora associations, the Office of Tunisians Abroad (Office des Tunisiens à l'Étranger - OTE) could also benefit from capacity building. Although the OTE has motivated and skilled staff, its structure and strategy are in need of revision, together with the priority to develop its database of diaspora organizations. The development of OTE's objectives and its intervention measures would be beneficial for the development of all diaspora structures, including the diaspora organizations and their future humanitarian responses.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Diaspora Emergency Action & Coordination initiative (DEMAC) was launched by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) in 2015 and is currently supported with funding from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.

In line with the objective to facilitate increased common ground between diaspora and institutional humanitarian action and enhance mutual knowledge and coordination between diaspora and humanitarian actors and the international humanitarian system, DEMAC conducts real-time reviews and case studies.<sup>1</sup> These aim at contributing to strengthening the DEMAC initiative by providing insights into the current modalities of diaspora humanitarian interventions and developing recommendations, resources and tools to support enhanced operational and strategic communication, and cooperation between diaspora organizations and institutional humanitarian actors.

The real-time review focuses on the period from July 2021 to September 2021, providing a rapid analysis of the humanitarian response of Tunisian diaspora organizations to the fourth and most severe wave of the COVID-19 pandemic with reference to the previous waves when diaspora organizations were also active.<sup>2</sup> The review focused on the profile of diaspora organizations engaged in the response; their implementation modalities and main activities; coordination among the diaspora organizations and other actors; their sources of funding; and their engagement with the institutional health and humanitarian systems.

The findings of this review will be shared with humanitarian actors engaged in Tunisia, including diaspora organizations and groups (hereinafter referred to as diaspora organizations), as well as more broadly within the humanitarian sector.

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<sup>1</sup> The first real-time review was on flash floods and landslides response in Timor-Leste in April 2021. The three case studies focus on Somalia, Pakistan and Ukraine. All reports are available on the DEMAC website: <https://demac.org/resource-library>.

<sup>2</sup> Media reports refer to either three or four waves in Tunisia from March 2020 to October 2021.



## 2. METHODOLOGY

Following an initial desk review which mapped the structure and activities of 24 diaspora organizations that were identified as active in humanitarian response<sup>3</sup>, a series of semi-structured interviews were held to gather further qualitative data. Interviews were held with diaspora organizations, the Tunisian Red Crescent Society, national authorities and a hospital. In total 15 people were interviewed.<sup>4</sup>

To gain a more nuanced understanding of the humanitarian action implemented by diaspora organizations, in-depth discussions were held with seven of the 24 diaspora organizations that were included in the mapping.<sup>5</sup> These organizations were selected based on the differing types of support provided for the humanitarian response and to capture any differences and similarities in relation to their responses. Due to COVID-19 movement restrictions, data collection was primarily remote, although the national researcher was able to carry out a small number of interviews in-person in Tunisia and visited a hospital (Sbikha) which received medical materials from the diaspora. The data and information gathered were collated and analyzed to identify major trends and findings that form the basis of this review.

### Limitations

<sup>3</sup> Please see Annex A for those diaspora organizations covered in the mapping.

<sup>4</sup> The field research was carried out by the national researcher, Dr Rawaa Salhi in Tunisia. The research was supported by two international researchers, Glenn O'Neil and Lois Austin, from Owl RE evaluation and research consultancy. Please see Annex B for the list of interviewees.

<sup>5</sup> The seven diaspora organizations were: L'Association des Tunisiens des Grandes Ecoles (ATUGE), Diaspora in Action, Tunisia of Tomorrow, Solidarity Tunisia, Tunisian Talents United, Associazione dei Tunisini in Italia and the coalition Urgence C19 Tunisie en Suisse.

There were a small number of limitations in undertaking the real-time review, as follows:

- Tunisia was under COVID-19 restrictions during the period of data collection with many staff of authorities, international and national non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs) and United Nations (UN) agencies working remotely throughout the review period, resulting in fewer potential interviewees being present in their offices and therefore available (even if they were still working, they were less responsive). In general, staff of these organizations were not available for interviews.
- The Tunisian diaspora organizations are largely run by volunteers who were not always available for interviews or to provide information on their activities, given their other responsibilities, such as full-time work or studies.
- COVID-19 travel restrictions prevented the international researchers from travelling to Tunisia to work more closely with the national researcher on the ground.



# 3. CONTEXT

## 3.1. Humanitarian crisis under review

**COVID-19 is a disease caused by SARS-COV-2 that emerged in 2019, leading to a global pandemic. It can cause lasting health problems and to date has led to over 4.8 million deaths globally.<sup>6</sup>**

COVID-19 vaccines have been developed and are now being rolled out in most countries. Aside from its impact on health in nearly all countries, COVID-19 is credited with shrinking the global economy by 4.4% in 2020, the worst decline since the Great Depression of the 1930s.<sup>7</sup>

The first case of COVID-19 in Tunisia was reported on 2 March 2020 by the Ministry of Health (MoH).<sup>8</sup> During the first wave of infections from March to July 2020, there was an average of 10 cases per day and 50 reported deaths.<sup>9</sup> The initial response of the authorities benefited from one of the strongest health systems in the region, and its comprehensive set of measures was cited as “one of the best performers” in the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>10</sup>

However, with the reopening of the economy and borders, a second wave from September 2020 – January 2021 saw numbers jump to some 1,500 COVID-19 cases per day, with 6,680 reported deaths by the end of January 2021. This continued into a third wave from April to May 2021, with the number of deaths doubling to 12,575 by the end of May 2021.

In July 2021, with the highly infectious Delta variant now circulating in Tunisia, a fourth wave hit with some 4,000 cases reported per day, resulting in hospitals’ intensive care units becoming fully occupied and the health system severely strained. At this point a MoH spokesperson warned that “unfortunately the health care system has collapsed.”<sup>11</sup> Tunisia also entered a period of political instability when on 25 July 2021 the Tunisia President Kais Saied dismissed the government, suspended parliament and invoked emergency powers.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) dashboard: <https://covid19.who.int/>; What is Coronavirus?: <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus>

<sup>7</sup> The International Monetary Fund as quoted in the following article: BBC News (24 January 2021), Coronavirus: How the pandemic has changed the world economy: <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-51706225>

<sup>8</sup> Garda World (3 March 2021), Tunisia: Health minister confirms first COVID-19 case March 2 <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/319331/tunisia-health-minister-confirms-first-covid-19-case-march-2>

<sup>9</sup> WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) dashboard-Tunisia: <https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/tn>

<sup>10</sup> Brookings Doha Centre (December 2020), Policy and Institutional Responses to COVID-19 in the Middle East and North Africa: Tunisia, p.1: <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/MENA-COVID-19-Survey-Tunisia-1.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> As quoted in: Albawaba (15 July 2021), Tunisia’s Healthcare Stretched to The Limits by 3rd Wave of COVID-19: <https://www.albawaba.com/news/tunisias-healthcare-stretched-limits-3rd-wave-covid-19-1438801>

<sup>12</sup> CSIS (27 July 2021), A Coup in Tunisia?: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/coup-tunisia>

The rapidly deteriorating situation was confirmed with Tunisia reporting in 2021 the highest number of deaths per capita from COVID-19 in the Middle East and North Africa, with 2,140 deaths per each million persons. These numbers brought Tunisia to levels similar to Italy (2,177), the United States of America (USA) (2,162), and situated the country as the twentieth highest out of all 155 countries with available data.<sup>13</sup> This was also markedly higher than neighboring countries; three times higher than Libya (704) and 15 times higher than Algeria (136).<sup>14</sup>

Facing a stark change of fortunes from the initial optimism of early 2020, government authorities, the media and civil society sounded the alarm in July 2021, calling for external support from neighbors and allies in the region, donor governments, the UN system, international actors – and the diaspora – as detailed in the next section. As of November 2021, there have been 715,396 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Tunisia with 25,294 deaths reported to the World Health Organization (WHO).<sup>15</sup> Some 39% of the population is fully vaccinated (two doses) and an additional 9% partially vaccinated (one dose).<sup>16</sup>

### 3.2. Actors and coordination

**The government of Tunisia acted quickly in March 2020 to establish a cross-ministerial committee, the National Coronavirus Response Authority (NCRA), directly supervised by the prime minister. The NCRA was established to coordinate and centralize measures on COVID-19 between the different ministries and institutions, including the country's 24 governorates or provinces.**

The NCRA was also responsible for overseeing two pre-existing structures: the Response and Relief Organization and the Regional National Committee for Disaster Prevention. The MoH and its network of hospitals and health clinics were at the frontline of the health response to COVID-19. In addition, the National Observatory of New and Emerging Diseases of the MoH played a key role in monitoring and communicating on the response. At the local level, municipal councils established crisis committees to improve local government responses to the pandemic.<sup>17</sup> The ongoing political unrest also impacted the COVID-19 response; in July 2021, the Tunisian President announced that the military health service would take over managing the national COVID-19 response.

<sup>13</sup> Coronavirus (COVID-19) deaths worldwide per one million population: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1104709/coronavirus-deaths-worldwide-per-million-inhabitants/>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Data updated as of 13 November 2021, WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) dashboard-Tunisia: <https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/tn>

<sup>16</sup> Data updated as of 13 November 2021, Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccinations - Statistics and Research: <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations?country=TUN>

<sup>17</sup> Brookings Doha Centre (December 2020), Op. Cit.; Portail national de la santé en Tunisie: <http://www.santetunisie.rns.tn/fr/>

Organizations including the Tunisian Red Crescent Society, Tunisian Scouts and grassroots organizations have worked to support government authorities' efforts with a range of activities including awareness raising campaigns, coordinating disinfectant operations, deploying volunteers to vaccination centers and providing oxygen concentrators and personal protective equipment (PPE) to hospitals.<sup>18</sup>

The UN in Tunisia has mobilized in support of the government to meet urgent COVID-19 related needs. As of July 2021, WHO had mobilized USD 8 million to strengthen the hospital system, equip laboratories and provide PPE and diagnostic kits. Other UN agencies have been working in their respective areas of expertise to strengthen national systems and support COVID-19 responses.<sup>19</sup>

The World Bank has provided an emergency loan of USD 100 million to support the purchase of vaccines and medical equipment.<sup>20</sup> The November 2020 draft of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Tunisia, 2021-25, which provides strategic direction for all UN agencies in the country, emphasizes the impact of COVID-19 on the socio-economic development of Tunisia and the recovery steps that will be needed.<sup>21</sup> Some international NGOs were also active in the COVID-19 response, such as Doctors without Borders, Médecins du Monde and Handicap International, although no INGOs were observed to be collaborating with diaspora organizations.<sup>22</sup> Those INGOs based in Tunisia for their operations in Libya were not found to be active in the COVID-19 response for Tunisia.

<sup>18</sup> IFRC (July 2021), Tunisia-COVID-19 Situation Update: <https://go.ifrc.org/reports/14543>; NDI (May 2020), Local Crisis Committees in Tunisia: <https://www.ndi.org/our-stories/local-crisis-committees-tunisia-ndi-s-partners-hold-key-roles-new-approaches-crisis>

<sup>19</sup> Including: UN Office on Drugs and Crime, UN Development Program, UN Children's Fund, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Populations Fund, UN Women, World Food Program and International Organization for Migration.

<sup>20</sup> UN in Action - Tunisia: (22 July 2021), Updates from the field #43: Addressing multiple impacts of the pandemic: <https://unsdg.un.org/latest/stories/updates-field-43-addressing-multiple-impacts-pandemic> (24 June 2021), Updates from the field #42: Teams heighten support to help countries battle COVID-19: <https://unsdg.un.org/latest/stories/updates-field-42-teams-heighten-support-help-countries-battle-covid-19>

<sup>21</sup> UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Tunisia, 2021-25 (draft) <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/Tunisia-UNSDCF-2021-2025.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> Medecins du Monde in Tunisia: <https://medecinsdumonde.be/regions/tunisie>; Handicap International in Tunisia <https://handicap-international.fr/fr/pays/tunisie>; MSF in Tunisia: <https://www.msf.org/tunisia>.

To meet the immense needs of the COVID-19 response, in March 2020 the government of Tunisia set up the “18-18” Fund to raise funds from public donations; as of October 2021, USD 60 million has been raised. The majority of funds raised were reported as being used for the purchase of medical equipment and the contracting of health staff.<sup>23</sup> Tunisia has also received significant financial support from the International Monetary Fund (USD 750 million loan in April 2020), the US government (USD 31 million grant in March 2021) and the European Union (USD 810,000 grant), in addition to medical equipment and vaccine donations from 13 EU countries and Switzerland (as of August 2021).<sup>24</sup>

Equipment and vaccine donations have also been sent from Middle Eastern and African countries including Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, in addition to deployment of health staff from China and the UK.<sup>25</sup> Tunisia has also received nearly two million vaccine donations through the COVAX initiative, donated primarily by the USA and France.<sup>26</sup>

Government authorities also identified the skills and resources of the Tunisian diaspora as important for the COVID-19 response relatively early on, with the MoH in November 2020 asking some 3,000 Tunisian doctors living abroad to consider returning to the country temporarily to help with the response.<sup>27</sup> In July 2021, The Tunisian Embassy in Paris launched a direct appeal to diaspora asking them to contribute financial donations or in-kind medical equipment and materials.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> WMC (25 January 2021), Coronavirus – Fonds 18-18 : 66% des sommes récoltées sont dépensées: <https://www.webman-agercenter.com/2021/01/25/462539/coronavirus-fonds-18-18-66-des-sommes-recoltees-sont-depensees/>.

<sup>24</sup> USAID (1 September 2021), USAID Assistance to Tunisia’s COVID-19 response: <https://www.usaid.gov/tunisia/covid-19-response>; European Commission (16 August 2021), Coronavirus: 13 European countries provide urgent assistance to Tunisia: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Coronavirus\\_13\\_European\\_countries\\_provide\\_urgent\\_assistance\\_to\\_Tunisia.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Coronavirus_13_European_countries_provide_urgent_assistance_to_Tunisia.pdf); Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs (16 July 2021), COVID-19 en Tunisie – La Suisse envoie du matériel sanitaire pour un montant de 335’000 francs : <https://www.admin.ch/gov/fr/accueil/documentation/communiques.msg-id-84467.html?fbclid=IwAR0faLvzcQbK-NQegVjzh9TuyjBWUkbb3huUPwqJik8Xo2zFsDbBh-DRGb2M>.

<sup>25</sup> IFRC (July 2021), Op. Cit.; Reuters (13 July 2021), Saudi Arabia to send one million doses of vaccine to Tunisia: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-send-one-million-doses-vaccine-tunisia-2021-07-12/>; FCDO, (13 August 2021), UK Emergency Medical Team deployed to help Tunisia tackle Covid-19 crisis: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-emergency-medical-team-deployed-to-help-tunisia-tackle-covid-19-crisis>

<sup>26</sup> COVAX vaccine roll-out – Tunisia: <https://www.gavi.org/covax-vaccine-roll-out/tunisia>

<sup>27</sup> Middle East Monitor (4 November 2020), Tunisia seeks help of doctors living abroad to fight Covid-19: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20201104-tunisia-seeks-help-of-doctors-living-abroad-to-fight-covid-19/>

<sup>28</sup> France 24 (11 July 2021), Face à une flambée du Covid-19, la Tunisie lance un appel à la diaspora en France: <https://www.france24.com/fr/afrique/20210711-face-%C3%A0-une-flamb%C3%A9e-du-covid-19-la-tunisie-lance-un-appel-%C3%A0-la-diaspora-en-france>





# 4. DIASPORA HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

## 4.1. The Tunisian Diaspora

**Since its independence in 1956, Tunisia has seen a strong rate of emigration, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s as the economic situation improved in France, the main destination for diaspora.**

Initially, most Tunisians worked as farmers and laborers although this expanded into the hospitality and retail sectors, with increasing numbers of Tunisians studying abroad and consequently settling in Europe and the USA in professional roles, including education, research, finance, health and business. An estimated 6.9% (813,213) of the Tunisian population live abroad, with 77% living in Europe. The main countries of residence are France, the USA, Italy and Israel.<sup>29</sup>

The diaspora is also a key contributor to the Tunisian economy through investments, creation of businesses and by sending money home.<sup>30</sup> Remittances from the Tunisian diaspora total some USD 1.9 million annually and constitute some 5% of the GDP.<sup>31</sup>

In the past, the diaspora has not fully participated in government efforts to engage them due to a lack of trust, which is possibly linked to the perception of the government wanting to control emigration. The 2011 revolution provided a new impetus for diaspora engagement, including the introduction of the possibility for diaspora to vote in elections. The Office of Tunisians Abroad (Office des Tunisiens à l'Etranger - OTE) established in 1988 continued as the main focal point of the authorities for the diaspora who actively engage with the OTE.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> EUDI F (April 2020), Diaspora engagement mapping - Tunisia: [https://diasporaforddevelopment.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/CF\\_Tunisia-v.2.pdf](https://diasporaforddevelopment.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/CF_Tunisia-v.2.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> InfoMigrants (27 December 2018), Migrants: OECD study examines Tunisian diaspora: <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/14109/migrants-oecd-study-examines-tunisian-diaspora>

<sup>31</sup> EUDI F (April 2020), Op. Cit.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.; Office des Tunisiens à l'Etranger: <http://ote.nat.tn/>

## 24 diaspora organizations mapped



### 4.2. Diaspora organization profiles

**The OTE estimates that there are over 400 Tunisian diaspora organizations globally. Many of these organizations were created following the 2011 revolution, when there was renewed optimism as to the potential role of diaspora in the political, social, and economic development of Tunisia.**

Of the 24 diaspora organizations mapped for this review, the majority were based in Europe (17, with 11 in France) and the remaining either global (2) or based in the USA or Canada (5). Many of the diaspora organizations were established by groups of Tunisian students and/or professionals for their social and professional development, such as the Tunisian American Young Professionals (TAYP) (USA), Diaspora in Action (Germany) and Tunisia of Tomorrow (France). Although the organizations had limited experience in humanitarian response, some organizations had been set up prior to the COVID-19 pandemic to support the most vulnerable in Tunisia, such as Tunis Aid - Aid for Tunisians with Disabilities (Germany), L'Association de Soutien aux Enfants (ASSEN) (France), Darna (France) and TunAction (France).

In 2020, coalitions of diaspora organizations were established specifically in response to COVID-19. Solidarity Tunisia (France and Germany) is a coalition representing some 70 diaspora and CSOs that was established initially to support Tunisian students in difficulty in Europe due to COVID-19, and later to support the COVID-19 response in Tunisia. Urgence C19 Tunisie en Suisse was established in July 2021 by 11 diaspora organizations in Switzerland and launched a joint fundraising campaign for the purchase of medical materials, in addition to soliciting donations of second-hand equipment from Swiss hospitals. These coalitions were temporary and established initially only for the COVID-19 response and were based on the networks and locations of organizations rather than along affinities linked to Tunisian regions or ethnicity.

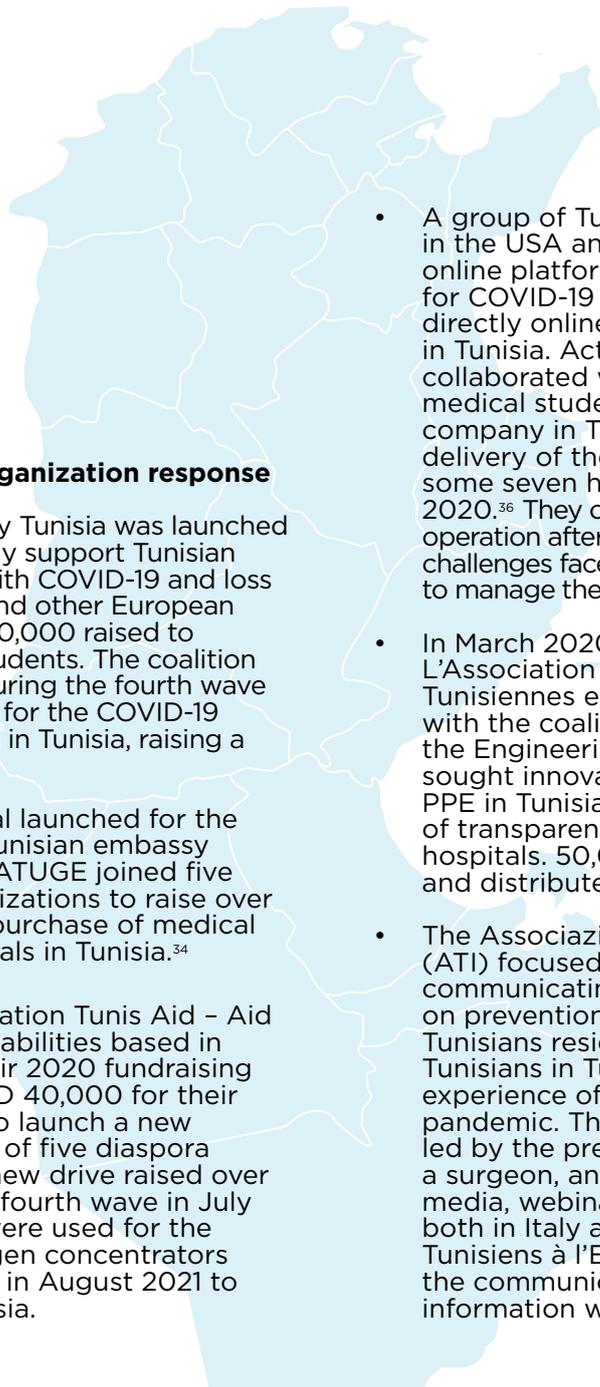
Yet, diaspora organizations recognized the advantages of working in a coalition as this representative commented:

“We realized that working as a collective of associations is much more practical and has a greater weight.”

**Concerning the structure of the 24 diaspora organizations:**

- All diaspora organizations were managed and governed by volunteers with only a few having permanent staff, for example, l'Association des Tunisiens des Grandes Ecoles (ATUGE).
- Most diaspora organizations had a non-profit or association status in their countries of residence, giving them the ability to legally raise funds.
- Only a few had a substantial presence in Tunisia; ATUGE has an office in Tunis, and Tunisia for Tomorrow has an office in Sfax. Darna has several foyers for disabled children in Tunisia (Darna was established in Tunisia with a representative office in France).
- For the implementation of their activities in Tunisia, most diaspora organizations were supported by volunteers and/or local civil society partners.





### Snapshot of diaspora organization response

- The coalition Solidarity Tunisia was launched in April 2020 to initially support Tunisian students struggling with COVID-19 and loss of income in France and other European countries with USD 170,000 raised to support over 1,400 students. The coalition was then mobilized during the fourth wave in Tunisia to fundraise for the COVID-19 response for hospitals in Tunisia, raising a further USD 70,000.<sup>33</sup>
- To support the appeal launched for the fourth wave by the Tunisian embassy in Paris in July 2021, ATUGE joined five other diaspora organizations to raise over USD 93,000 for the purchase of medical equipment for hospitals in Tunisia.<sup>34</sup>
- The diaspora organization Tunis Aid – Aid for Tunisians with Disabilities based in Germany built on their 2020 fundraising drives that raised USD 40,000 for their COVID-19 response to launch a new drive with a coalition of five diaspora organizations.<sup>35</sup> The new drive raised over USD 106,000 for the fourth wave in July 2021 and the funds were used for the purchase of 100 oxygen concentrators that were distributed in August 2021 to hospitals across Tunisia.
- A group of Tunisian IT specialists based in the USA and Canada created Sbitar, an online platform where medical equipment for COVID-19 could be purchased directly online for delivery to hospitals in Tunisia. Activated in April 2020, Sbitar collaborated with an association of medical students and a local logistics company in Tunisia for the purchase and delivery of the equipment, supporting some seven hospitals in April and May 2020.<sup>36</sup> They consequently stopped their operation after several months due to challenges faced by their small volunteer team to manage the logistics of the response.
- In March 2020, the Swiss-based L'Association des Compétences Tunisiennes en Suisse (ACTS) partnered with the coalition Yes We Breath, led by the Engineering School in Sousse, that sought innovative solutions to produce PPE in Tunisia, such as 3D production of transparent visors for distribution to hospitals. 50,000 visors were produced and distributed.
- The Associazione dei Tunisini in Italia (ATI) focused its COVID-19 response on communicating accurate information on prevention and care, initially to Tunisians residing in Italy and then to Tunisians in Tunisia, based on the early experience of Italy combatting the pandemic. The communications were led by the president of the association, a surgeon, and were featured on social media, webinars and television programs, both in Italy and Tunisia. La Voix des Tunisiens à l'Etranger also focused on the communications aspect by holding information webinars of diaspora experts.

<sup>33</sup> Solidarity Tunisia: <https://solidarite-tunisie.org/>

<sup>34</sup> Six organizations of the joint action: ATUGE, ASSEN, TAYP, ADAI (association of graduates of IPEST (Institut Préparatoire aux Etudes Supérieures Technologiques en Tunisie )); Darna (diaspora organization), Hum'AM (association of Tunisian engineering students of l'Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts et Métiers de Paris and T2RIV - Tunisians of Both Shores; fundraising page: <https://www.helloasso.com/associations/hum-am/collectes/campagne-de-collecte-de-fonds-pour-la-lutte-contre-la-covid-19-en-tunisie>

<sup>35</sup> Five organizations of the joint fundraising drive: Tunis Aid – Aid for Tunisians with Disabilities, Association de Médecins Tunisiens en France (Monde), Lost & Found Tunisia, Diaspora in Action and Association of Tunisians in Stuttgart.

<sup>36</sup> According to their Facebook page, the hospitals supported were: Charles Nicolle, Habib Thameur, Mongi Slim, La Rabta, Charles Nicolle, Menzal Bourguiba, Zaghouen (<https://www.facebook.com/sbitar.org>).

### 4.3. Motivation to respond

**With most Tunisian diaspora based in Europe, they knew first-hand of the risks and spread of COVID-19 before it became widespread in Tunisia. Consequently, Tunisian diaspora acted early to support their homeland, as demonstrated by the actions of many diaspora organizations in early 2020 as described above.**

The Tunisian diaspora also recognized the challenges of the authorities to manage the overwhelming needs of the COVID-19 response. This was a major motivation for the diaspora and Tunisian civil society in general to mobilize and support their country. Consequently, they were able to mobilize their existing members and networks to provide financial and in-kind support for the response. This was further motivated by the direct appeal of the Tunisian Embassy in Paris, as this diaspora organization representative commented:

“We mobilized quickly to provide volunteers to support the emergency cell set up at the Tunisian Embassy in Paris; it was a huge task to ensure the coordination for a large-scale collection and with the different stakeholders all along the process of collecting funds, selecting equipment and suppliers, the buying process and delivery.”

#### 4.4. How did diaspora organizations respond?

**Health:** In response to the fourth wave of July 2021, the diaspora organizations were mainly focused on the urgent medical requirements of hospitals and other health services in Tunisia. Nearly all diaspora organizations were involved in setting up fundraising campaigns, mostly through social media and crowdfunding platforms, to fund the purchase of medical equipment and supplies for the country's COVID-19 response. The equipment and supplies were either purchased in Europe and then shipped to Tunisia or were purchased directly in Tunisia. A few organizations, such as the Swiss coalition Urgence C19 Tunisie en Suisse, Tunis Aid, ATUGE and partners also solicited donations of second-hand equipment that was then shipped to Tunisia. Once in Tunisia, the dispatch and distribution of the equipment and materials was then organized by the MoH, the diaspora organizations and/or their volunteers and local CSO partners, as described further below. Hospitals also reported receiving direct support from individual diaspora and local CSOs.

**Food security and livelihoods:** Several organizations were also active in supporting vulnerable groups in Tunisia. For example, ASSEN distributed food and hygiene kits for families to support 350 vulnerable children. Solidarity Tunisia focused on supporting Tunisian students abroad through the distribution of USD 116 (EUR 100) cash grants and food parcels as described above, in addition to helping some students in Tunisia.

**Economic recovery:** Diaspora organizations also sought to contribute to the COVID-19 recovery of Tunisia through various initiatives and projects. For example, a joint solidarity fund was established by ATUGE, TAYP and ASSEN to scale up local e-learning initiatives and support entrepreneurs in Tunisia to create and implement innovative solutions as part of the COVID-19 recovery. Tunisia Tomorrow organized a conference in Sfax, Tunisia, "Forum du Sud pour L'économie sociale et solidaire" in October 2021 focusing on inclusive economic development for the post-COVID-19 recovery.<sup>37</sup> The diaspora organizations sought ways to support the economic recovery of the country, as this diaspora organization representative commented:

“As the world struggles to combat the effects of COVID-19, many entrepreneurs in Tunisia have found innovative solutions to address the needs and we should support them.”

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<sup>37</sup> ATUGE, TAYP & ASSEN solidarity fund: [http://tayp.atuge.org/index\\_en.html](http://tayp.atuge.org/index_en.html); Tunisia Tomorrow conference: <https://tunisia-tomorrow.com/sudess>

**Awareness-raising:** Some diaspora organizations also focused on informing and educating Tunisians about COVID-19, such as ATI and La Voix des Tunisiens à l'Étranger, with one diaspora organization representative describing their added value in this respect:

“In Europe we had been through COVID-19 before Tunisia; it was a war against the ‘unknown’ there, so we could speak of our experience with the pandemic and disseminate information to allow Tunisian citizens to take the necessary precautions.”

These organizations not only focused on the spread of the virus and prevention, but also on psychological health and advice as to how to get through the difficult period.

**Coordination:** Other diaspora organizations have played the role of coordinator between the representatives of the Tunisian State abroad, such as the consulates, and the diaspora. For example, Diaspora in Action has launched an initiative of dialogue between diaspora civil society activists and the Tunisian embassy in Germany, in order to create a strategy of assistance during COVID-19, initially for helping Tunisian students living abroad.

**Information sharing and fundraising:** Although diaspora organizations were active in responding in Tunisia, many organizations participated through publicizing the fundraising campaigns of other diaspora organizations or CSOs. This was the case for the coalitions formed, where many of the organizations focused on sharing information amongst their members and networks, with another organization taking the lead on the logistics and response aspects. As another example, United Tunisians in Canada and elsewhere co-organized a COVID-19 fundraising telethon in Canada where the main beneficiary was the Tunisian Red Crescent Society.

#### 4.5. Funding for the diaspora organization response

**Funding for the diaspora COVID-19 response has come primarily from the Tunisian diaspora. No institutional donors, such as foundations or governments, were identified as having provided financial support to the diaspora response, although medical establishments in Europe did donate used medical equipment.**

As diaspora organizations often purchased medical equipment and supplies directly from manufacturers, several reported receiving discounted or cost prices as a goodwill gesture from the manufacturers. Several diaspora organizations also mentioned it was challenging to raise funds, especially in terms of reaching beyond the diaspora, as this diaspora representative commented:

“Our funds came almost exclusively from diaspora in this country; we really struggled to get other citizens to donate.”

Most funds were raised through the websites of diaspora organizations, social media and crowdfunding platforms (e.g. Helloasso<sup>38</sup>). Facebook and other social media platforms were also important to publicize the COVID-19 response and provide feedback to supporters through photos of the delivery of equipment and materials, from their purchase to their arrival in hospitals.

The funds raised were used mainly to purchase equipment and supplies, and to pay for the cost of transporting the goods to Tunisia. Once in Tunisia, most organizations reported their costs were minimal, as they relied on the MoH, volunteers, or local CSOs to support their work. The funds raised by diaspora organizations ranged from relatively small (USD 3,000) to quite significant. For example, Solidarity Tunisia raised over USD 230,000 in total, and the joint campaign of ATUGE raised over USD 145,000.

<sup>38</sup> Helloasso: <https://www.helloasso.com>.

#### 4.6. Implementation modalities and recipient selection

**For the mobilization of diaspora in countries of residence, the diaspora organizations activated their members and networks for the collection of funds and in some cases for the securing of donated equipment and material.**

Some diaspora organizations also worked in coalition as described above. Diaspora organizations interviewed explained that creating coalitions was a deliberate choice to be able to secure broader diaspora support and raise the necessary funds for the purchase of the relatively expensive medical equipment and materials. Many diaspora organizations also worked closely with their embassies, consulates, or social-cultural centers abroad.

The diaspora response to the fourth wave in Tunisia was predominantly focused on the health sector, and diaspora organizations aimed to meet the urgent needs of the Tunisian hospitals and other medical establishments. For this purpose, the MoH established a special commission to determine the needs of the hospitals and other medical establishments, to communicate these needs to the diaspora organizations, and organize the reception of donated or purchased goods in Tunisia. According to the diaspora organizations, the MoH required that all medical equipment and supplies coming from abroad be approved and processed through their offices. The MoH also supported the diaspora organizations in processing the goods through the customs services. Some diaspora organizations mentioned that the coordination of the MoH was needed whereas others mentioned that they faced challenges in having their goods enter the country and obtaining all the necessary information and authorizations, as this diaspora organization representative commented:

“We faced challenges and issues in dealing with the customs and health systems and structures with a main difficulty being access to updated information.”

On this basis, the diaspora organizations established which were the urgent needs of the hospitals through consulting the lists established by the commission of the MoH. At the same time, diaspora organizations would complement these official lists with their own contacts and networks in Tunisia to determine any unmet needs, for example in the remote, rural or mountainous regions, as this diaspora organization representative explained:

“We also do our own checking of needs, we telephone our contacts in the isolated and underprivileged areas to understand what they need.”





Once the equipment and materials were either purchased in Tunisia or had passed through customs, they were then either dispatched directly to the hospitals and establishments by the suppliers (for those purchased locally), or were transported by the MoH, CSO partners, volunteers or by the hospitals themselves.

**Reporting and accountability:** The diaspora organizations interviewed did not have any established accountability or reporting mechanisms, but the majority did use social media and their websites to provide photos, video testimonies and updates of the various steps of delivering the medical equipment and supplies, in addition to holding webinars to discuss the situation in Tunisia and their COVID-19 responses. Many also published the receipts of the purchases made and in some cases the budgets of their operations. Diaspora organizations emphasized the transparency of their operations, as this representative explained:

“We communicated fully and in detail about each of our decisions regarding the allocation of resources and donations and we ensured a complete follow-up and monitoring of the different phases of the process: from the money collected to the final delivery of the material.”

Diaspora organizations also reported that their civil society partners or volunteers carried out follow-up visits to the hospitals some three months after the deliveries to observe how the equipment and materials were being used. Diaspora organizations commented that the use of equipment and materials was generally positive but they often identified consequent needs. Darna adopted a novel solution, collaborating with a video blogger, Rabii Ben Brahim alias “the Dreamer”<sup>39</sup>, who accompanied and documented their distributions to 26 hospitals on social media channels such as YouTube and Instagram.

<sup>39</sup> The Dreamer: <https://www.instagram.com/thedreamerwildandfree>

#### 4.7. Coordination modalities

**As most diaspora response activities were in the health sector, they mainly coordinated with the MoH rather than with the NCRA, the overall government coordination body for the COVID-19 response. There was no overall coordination established by the international institutional actors; more so they tended to carry out their COVID-19 responses in coordination with the MoH and their existing in-country partners.**

The diaspora organizations mobilized their own staff, volunteers and/or partnered with local CSOs for their COVID-19 responses. No diaspora organization reported collaborating with any UN agency or any other institutional humanitarian organization working in Tunisia, as they saw the MoH, medical establishments, and local CSOs as the most well-situated partners for their COVID-19 response. For those who worked with local CSOs, these were mostly established through previous projects to help vulnerable groups in Tunisia, as this diaspora organization representative commented:

“Our association had previously supported local organizations working with orphans and the disabled and it was to them we turned first to see how we could work together to fight COVID-19.”

Many of the diaspora organizations did collaborate in organizing joint fundraising campaigns and responses as described above and this supported coordination for the response, such as smaller diaspora organizations collaborating to work as one and reduce inefficiencies. However, in Tunisia, there was less coordination reported between diaspora organizations, their coalitions, volunteers and partners in the implementation. According to the organizations there was little risk of overlap and duplication due to any lack of coordination, given that the needs were immense.





# 5. CHALLENGES IN THE DIASPORA HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

**The key challenges highlighted by diaspora organizations in engaging in the humanitarian response are as follows:**

## **Resources:**

- Difficulties to raise funds needed for the response, such as enlarging the supporter base beyond the diaspora members and networks. A partial solution found was reaching out to other diaspora organizations for resources, although it still remained within the diaspora community.
- Challenges to have enough volunteers to support the fundraising drives and coordination work. Diaspora organizations commented that working in a coalition was a possible solution to support the lack of resources.

## **Coordination:**

- Challenges to have information from the different structures in Tunisia (e.g. customs, MoH, hospitals), linked to difficulties to identify the needs of the hospitals and other establishments.
- Some diaspora organizations faced difficulties in internal coordination: balancing the need to coordinate and validate the COVID-19 response with their governance (boards) against the need for rapidity of the response.

## **Implementation:**

- Diaspora organizations were not used to carrying out large scale operations, lacking know-how and staff for: coordination with different stakeholders; process of collecting funds, selection of equipment and suppliers; reception and delivery process.
- Challenges were also reported by some diaspora organizations in the processing of the purchased/donated equipment once it arrived in the country, in their ability to have it approved rapidly by customs and validated and released by the MoH.
- For many of the diaspora organizations, it was their first humanitarian action and they felt there was a lot more to learn about humanitarian response, such as selection criteria, communication, and coordination. They suggested they could learn further from NGOs and other actors experienced in humanitarian response.

## **Other:**

- The different ways the diaspora understands how much civil society actors should engage in politics; this can influence the motivation of the diaspora to respond to crises such as COVID-19.



# 6. FUTURE DIASPORA HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND ENGAGEMENT

**The following are some proposed actions which could be considered to develop and strengthen the engagement of diaspora organizations during future humanitarian crises and in the COVID-19 recovery in Tunisia:**

- The COVID-19 response provided a positive example of Tunisian diaspora organizations working together, and with the authorities and CSOs. This experience could be further built upon to develop longer-term partnerships. For example, this could be achieved through the launch of calls for development and/or humanitarian projects that require coalitions of organizations for implementation.
- Based on their experience of COVID-19, the diaspora organizations have an interest and potential to be further involved in humanitarian response, even if their normal areas of interventions are not directly dedicated to humanitarian work. Initiatives could be explored to develop their expertise further.
- The diaspora organizations have already demonstrated their ability to support Tunisia in the COVID-19 recovery and could further be involved given their strong professional expertise in many key areas, such as health, information technology, entrepreneurship, etc.
- Focus on the younger Tunisian diaspora. According to the interviewees, the diaspora organizations created by the younger Tunisian diaspora are the more serious, dynamic and active; these could be a focus of future capacity building and development for humanitarian response.

- In general, the diaspora organizations would benefit from strengthened internal structures. The management of projects and their follow-up can only achieve the strategic goals of an association with a clear structure and support (i.e. board, executive team, project officers). Diaspora organizations could further explore the professionalization of their organizations within their possible means.
- Although there have been coalitions created and collaboration between diaspora organizations in the COVID-19 response, there is no initiative for any debriefing exercises on lessons learned to gather together the involved diaspora organizations for collective reflection. This could be an opportunity for DEMAC to mobilize its expertise in support of the diaspora organizations for such an exercise.
- As the first direct partner of the diaspora associations, the OTE could also benefit from capacity building. Although the OTE has motivated and skilled staff, its structure and strategy are in need of revision, together with the priority to develop its database of diaspora organizations. The development of OTE's objectives and its intervention measures would be beneficial for the development of all diaspora structures, including the diaspora organizations and their future humanitarian responses.





# ANNEX A

# MAPPING OF DIASPORA ORGANIZATIONS

No	Name of diaspora organization, website, description, country of residence	Set-up	Response description and financing	Implementation mode and local partner
1	L'Association des Tunisiens des Grandes Ecoles (ATUGE) <a href="http://www.atuge.org">www.atuge.org</a> Current and former university students who have studied abroad.  Global: France, UK, Asia Pacific and Tunisia	Association (established in Tunisia with staff).	As of October 2021, over USD 145,000 has been raised from individual supporters, some of it through a joint operation with TAYP and ASSEN. The funds have been used to purchase medical equipment.	The implementation is facilitated by the ATUGE office in Tunis and carried out by the military health services, Tunisia customs and volunteers of partner associations.
2	Diaspora in action <a href="http://www.diasporainaction.org">www.diasporainaction.org</a> Association of Tunisians Living Abroad; encouraging diaspora activities in support of Tunisia.  Europe (Germany)	Association and online platform, managed by a team of volunteers.	Fundraising partner for Tunis Aid – Aid for Tunisians with Disabilities (see below); active fundraising on Facebook and Clubhouse.	Diaspora in Action's partners are mainly: Tunis Aid, El Space, Network of Social Innovators in Tunisia, Tunisian Academics society and Tunisia of Tomorrow. Also collaborated with the Tunisian embassy in Germany for the COVID-19 response.
3	Tunisia of Tomorrow <a href="http://www.tunisia-tomorrow.com">www.tunisia-tomorrow.com</a> Association of Tunisians (young professionals) living in France.  France and Tunisia	Association managed by a team of volunteers.	The association raises funds mainly through donations and the sale of articles in support of its COVID-19 response. The association also focuses on an equitable economic recovery from COVID-19.	During the last campaign for COVID-19 response, Tunisians of Tomorrow acted as a relay between the associations based in Europe and the associations needing support in Tunisia. They made available an online platform for the collection of donations from diaspora associations in Europe. Their partners are mainly Diaspora in Action (Germany) and Eliens (Paris).
4	Solidarity Tunisia <a href="http://www.solidarite-tunisie.org">www.solidarite-tunisie.org</a>  France, Germany	Coalition of diaspora and CSOs (some 70 associations and 40 volunteers).	Solidarity organized firstly a campaign to support Tunisian students in need in Europe (mainly France); raising USD 170,000 as of October 2021. A second fundraising campaign for Tunisia and the purchase of medical equipment raised USD 70,000. They also aim to continue their actions in a sustainable manner for the post-crisis period.	Solidarity has several partners but mainly ATUGE and has representatives active in Tunisia.
5	Tunisian Talents United <a href="http://www.tunisian Talents.org">www.tunisian Talents.org</a> TTU was created with the aim to identify, attract, develop and coach Tunisia's greatest young talents and potential future leaders from cross sectors and worldwide.  Global	Association	Focused on training and support for Tunisians, that would be useful for the COVID-19 recovery.	Not directly implementing a COVID-19 response (more so training and education).
6	Association of Tunisians in Italy (ATI) (Associazione dei tunisini in italia) <a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/2001748663404625">https://www.facebook.com/groups/2001748663404625</a>  Italy	Association	ATI's main action was in communication actions: communicating accurate information on COVID-19 both for Tunisians in Italy and the Tunisian population.	ATI shared information on social media and was present on webinars, television programs and media (in both Italy and Tunisia). ATI works in collaboration with the Tunisian Embassy in Italy.

7	<p>La Voix des Tunisiens à l'Etranger  <a href="https://www.facebook.com/voixtunisiensetranger/">https://www.facebook.com/voixtunisiensetranger/</a>            France</p>	Association	<p>During COVID-19, the organization held several webinars, in order to provide Tunisians in Tunisia or abroad with information. These webinars provided information, but also served to draw attention to different challenges, such as mental health during confinement. These actions were voluntary, and were not funded.</p>	<p>Voice of Tunisians Abroad has collaborated with individuals (not associations) to provide their expertise during webinars.</p>
8	<p>Tunisian American Young Professionals (TAYP)  <a href="http://www.tayp.org">www.tayp.org</a>            Young Tunisian professionals working in USA.            USA</p>	Association		<p>ATI works in collaboration with the Tunisian Embassy in Italy.</p>
9	<p>Tunisia Aid  <a href="http://www.tunisia-aid.org">www.tunisia-aid.org</a>            Organization launched in 2011 by Tunisian diaspora in USA.            USA</p>	Non-profit organization with a board and managed by a team of volunteers.	<p>TAYP is part of a joint operation with ATUGE that has raised USD 14,000 from individual supporters as of October 2021.</p>	<p>Voice of Tunisians Abroad has collaborated with individuals (not associations) to provide their expertise during webinars.</p>
10	<p>Sbitar  <a href="http://www.sbitar.org">www.sbitar.org</a>            Group of Tunisian diaspora that created an online platform in response to COVID-19.            USA, Canada, Tunisia</p>	Network group of volunteers.	<p>Sbitar is an online platform created by diaspora where medical equipment for COVID-19 can be purchased directly online for delivery to hospitals. Activated in April 2020, Sbitar have advice posted on their website that they are no longer accepting donations.</p>	<p>Associa-med, an association of students studying medicine in Tunisia helped identify needs and collaborate with a private logistics company for purchasing and delivering equipment.</p>
11	<p>Tunis Aid – Aid for Tunisians with Disabilities  <a href="http://www.tunisaid.org">www.tunisaid.org</a>  <a href="https://www.facebook.com/TunisAid.e.v">https://www.facebook.com/TunisAid.e.v</a>            founded in 2018 by Tunisian diaspora students and engineers in Munich to support people with disabilities in Tunisia.            Germany</p>	Registered charitable organization in Germany managed by a team of volunteers.	<p>1st fundraising drive: USD 32,600; 2nd fundraising drive: USD 11,650; 3rd fundraising drive: USD 106,000 (as of October 2021) from individual supporters and partners (including USD 27,000 from the Association de Médecins Tunisiens en France (Monde). Donated equipment (hospital beds, cabinets and an incubator) was also received from the Northwest Hospital Sanderbusch.</p>	<p>Tunis Aid sent new and used medical materials to Tunisia; its volunteers also delivered the materials directly to Tunisia. First fundraising drive was used to purchase and deliver medical equipment to 9 hospitals in Tunisia. They work with local partners and volunteers in Tunisia. The third fundraising drive was used to provide 100 oxygen concentrators to hospitals across Tunisia.</p>
12	<p>Association des médecins tunisiens dans le monde  <a href="http://www.assomtm.com">www.assomtm.com</a>            Founded in 2020 by Tunisian doctors based in France.            France</p>	Association	<p>Collaborating with Tunis Aid (as described above); also has some independent actions for its COVID-19 response, such as purchasing equipment.</p>	<p>Associa-med, an association of students studying medicine in Tunisia helped identify needs and collaborate with a private logistics company for purchasing and delivering equipment.</p>

13	Tunisian Community Association <a href="https://www.facebook.com/TunisianCommunityUK/">https://www.facebook.com/TunisianCommunityUK/</a> Association of Tunisians living in Britain and Ireland.  UK	Network	In July 2021, the association was fundraising for shipping medical equipment and Oxygen Concentrators to Tunisia.	Organizing with support of the Tunisian Embassy in London and local authorities in Tunisia.
14	Tunisian Competence Network in Toulouse (RCT2) <a href="https://www.facebook.com/RCT2.31/">https://www.facebook.com/RCT2.31/</a> Association of Tunisians living and studying in France.  France	Association	The RCT2 provides charitable support to vulnerable groups in Tunisia and has collaborated with other diaspora organizations for their COVID-19 response.	RCT2 Collaborates with the Tunisian Red Crescent Society.
15	United Tunisians in Canada and Elsewhere (TSCA) <a href="http://www.utce.ca">www.utce.ca</a> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/utce.ca/">https://www.facebook.com/utce.ca/</a> Association of Tunisians living in Canada.  Montréal, Québec, Canada	TSCA is a federal corporation entity registered with Corporations Canada	TSCA was a co-organizer of a Telethon COVID-19 fundraising event in July 2021 in support of Tunisian Red Crescent Society.	TSCA has promoted crowdfunding appeal of Islamic Relief Canada. Canadian-Tunisian Chamber of Commerce is among its partners.
16	Canadian-Tunisian Chamber of Commerce <a href="http://www.cccantun.ca/contact/">www.cccantun.ca/contact/</a>  Montréal, Québec, Canada	Non-profit organization	Canadian-Tunisian Chamber of Commerce has sponsored a number of fundraising activities for COVID-19 including the July 2021 Telethon (see TSCA).	Canadian-Tunisian Chamber of Commerce partners with the TSCA.
17	Tunisians of Both Shores <a href="https://www.facebook.com/T2RIV.ORG">https://www.facebook.com/T2RIV.ORG</a> Association of Tunisians living in France supporting vulnerable populations in Tunisia.  Paris, France	Association	Tunisians of Both Shores has fundraised for the purchase and delivery of medical equipment for hospitals in Tunisia.	Tunisians of Both Shores has volunteers based in Tunisia.
18	TunAction <a href="https://www.facebook.com/TunAction">https://www.facebook.com/TunAction</a> Association of Tunisians living in France supporting vulnerable populations in Tunisia.  France	Association	TunAction carried out crowdfunding and raised USD 6,400 for the purchase of oxygen concentrators in collaboration with the Al Mahabba Foundation, a Tunisian CSO.	TunAction collaborates with the Al Mahabba Foundation, a Tunisian CSO.
19	Aweldna (Aweldna in Arabic means "our children") <a href="http://www.awledna.com">www.awledna.com</a> Association of Tunisians living in France focusing on education.  France	Association	Aweldna's Main role in COVID-19 response was as a fundraising partner for other organizations.	Aweldna was a fundraising partner for several organizations during the COVID.

20	<p>Tunisian Passion <a href="http://www.tunisiepassion.org/">http://www.tunisiepassion.org/</a> Association of young Tunisians living abroad.</p> <p>France (with members globally)</p>	Association	<p>Provided support for other diaspora organizations involved in the COVID-19 response.</p>	<p>Tunisian Passion has a main project called “Helma”, (a word in Arabic that means a dream). This project aims to mobilize the diaspora for the benefit of young Tunisians. Tunisian Passion’s partners include: Vigilance Committee for Tunisian Democracy, Social Innovators Network, Tunisian Talent United and Inspiring Tunisia.</p>
21	<p>L’Association des Compétences Tunisiennes en Suisse (ACTS) <a href="https://www.asso-acts.ch/">https://www.asso-acts.ch/</a> Association of Tunisian professionals living in Switzerland.</p> <p>Switzerland</p>	Association	<p>ACTS is a partner with the Yes We Breath coalition, that produces COVID-19 response equipment locally in Tunisia. ACTS has donated USD 3,000 to this coalition and is continuing to fundraise.</p>	<p>Yes We Breath coalition (led by The Engineers School in Sousse).</p>
22	<p>L’Association de Soutien aux Enfants (ASSEN) <a href="https://assen-asso.org/">https://assen-asso.org/</a> Established by Tunisian students in Paris to assist orphans in Tunisia.</p> <p>France</p>	Association	<p>ASSEN raised USD 24,000 for its COVID-19 response which financed the purchase of medical equipment for hospitals and hygiene and food kits (for vulnerable families reaching 350 children). Also partnered with ATUGE and TAYP on joint fundraising campaign as described above.</p>	<p>Volunteers in Tunisia, TAYP and ATUGE.</p>
23	<p>Urgence C19 Tunisie en Suisse <a href="https://www.facebook.com/urgence.covid.CH.TN">https://www.facebook.com/urgence.covid.CH.TN</a></p> <p>Switzerland</p>	Coalition of 11 diaspora associations	<p>The coalition raises funds for the purchase of medical equipment and solicits second-hand materials from Swiss hospitals. They have shipped three containers of beds, masks, oxygen concentrators; including 31 hospital beds donated by the main hospital in Geneva, Switzerland (Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève).</p>	<p>Volunteers in Tunisia and works with local CSOs.</p>
24	<p>Darna <a href="https://darnafrance.com/">https://darnafrance.com/</a></p> <p>France and Tunisia</p>	Association in France and Tunisia.	<p>Darna raised funds and purchased equipment and materials for 26 hospitals in Tunisia raising some USD 250,000 (but majority of funds raised in Tunisia from local donations).</p>	<p>Darna collaborates with artists to support fundraising and collaborated with a video blogger, Rabii Ben Brahim alias “The Dreamer”, who accompanied and documented on social media the distribution of items to the hospitals.</p>

# ANNEX B

# TABLE OF ACTORS INTERVIEWED

Diaspora Organization	Location	Website/Social Media Page (when available)
L'Association des Tunisiens des Grandes Ecoles (ATUGE)	Global	<a href="http://www.atuge.org">www.atuge.org</a>
Associazione dei Tunisini in Italia	Italy	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/2001748663404625">www.facebook.com/groups/2001748663404625</a>
Darna	Tunisia, France	<a href="https://darnafrance.com">https://darnafrance.com</a>
Diaspora in Action	Germany	<a href="http://www.diasporainaction.org">www.diasporainaction.org</a>
Sbitar	USA, Canada, Tunisia	<a href="https://sbitar.org">https://sbitar.org</a>
Solidarity Tunisia	France, Germany	<a href="https://solidarite-tunisie.org">https://solidarite-tunisie.org</a>
Tunisia of Tomorrow	France, Germany	<a href="https://tunisia-tomorrow.com">https://tunisia-tomorrow.com</a>
Tunisia Passion	France	<a href="http://www.tunisiepassion.org">http://www.tunisiepassion.org</a>
Tunisian Talents United	Global	<a href="http://www.tunisian Talents.org">www.tunisian Talents.org</a>
Urgence C19 Tunisie en Suisse	Switzerland	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/urgence.covid.CH.TN">https://www.facebook.com/urgence.covid.CH.TN</a>
Voice of Tunisians Abroad	France	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/voix tunisiense-tranger">https://www.facebook.com/voix tunisiense-tranger</a>
<b>Other actors</b>		
Ministry of Health	Tunisia	<a href="http://www.santetunisie.rns.tn">http://www.santetunisie.rns.tn</a>
Office of Tunisians Abroad	Tunisia	<a href="http://ote.nat.tn/">http://ote.nat.tn/</a>
Sbikha Hospital	Tunisia	n/a
Tunisian Red Crescent Society	Tunisia	n/a



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Produced by DEMAC – Diaspora Emergency Action & Coordination,  
hosted by Danish Refugee Council and funded by USAID.

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