BACKGROUND

The emergence of a vibrant private sector represents one of the most important steps towards economic growth and development. In developed economies, the private sector usually accounts for the bulk of the investment, jobs and wealth creation, which is why government encourages its development as much as possible.

To help African countries manage the development of their private sector, UNITAR offers this instructor-led online course under the Technical Assistance Programme on “Strengthening the Human Resources of Sub-Saharan African Countries for Private Sector Development” supported by the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA).

This course, which reflects some of the key recommendations gained from the Programme’s needs assessment phase, aims at enhancing the participants’ knowledge and understanding of private sector development in general, its preconditions, risks and challenges that might be faced by private sector actors in developing countries, and policy options for countries seeking to achieve higher levels of growth and stability.

The course will analyse, amongst other developing country or regional examples, the case study of Sub-Saharan African countries, examining various obstacles faced by private sector development in the region, the significance of private sector development within the region, the current business environment and the steps that can be taken by the policy makers to improve their business environment for private sector development, including financial services and human resources.

According to the World Bank, there are more than 500 million economically active poor individuals in the world operating microenterprises and small businesses, and most of them do not have access to financial services. One of the ways by which their demand for financial services has been met is through the provisions of microcredit. The microfinance industry has been very successful in helping the poor to obtain necessary financial resources for
entrepreneurship purposes, as the support for such activities is perceived to reduce poverty and empower certain segments of the population. However, there are still a vast number of poor individuals who have not been able to benefit from this financial assistance, which clearly points out the need for the microfinance industry to grow and become more sustainable. It needs to generate greater support from the donors as well as to play a greater role in the financial sector.

The course is designed to help participants learn about sustainable microfinance in terms of principles and good practices as they are applied by worldwide institutions today. It provides a comprehensive overview of the microeconomic fundamentals and how microfinance activities are implemented, evaluated, and managed. It will also help individuals gain greater insight into microfinance practices.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the course, the participants should be able to:

- Explain the importance of the private sector development in general and for Sub-Saharan region in particular;
- Identify the main challenges faced by developing countries in the private sector development with in-depth analysis of such challenges being faced by the Sub-Saharan region;
- Understand how the business environment can help strengthen the private sector and the steps that should be taken to provide a enabling business environment to accelerate private sector growth;
- Identify solutions that increase access to finance for the private sector;
- Understand the role of human capital in private sector development, challenges and trends faced by Sub-Saharan region in providing efficient human resource services and the needed policy reforms.

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

This self-paced course will be delivered from November 20 to December 15, 2017. The course will be moderated asynchronously on a weekly basis and participants will be required to participate in the weekly on-line discussions. In addition, each module has interactive lessons that provide the core content around the topic for that module. The lessons have built-in quizzes that allow participants to assess their learning. Additional resources such as bibliographies, web links and optional readings are provided for participants who wish to deepen their knowledge of the course topic.

METHODOLOGY

Course is internet-based, moderated by international expert, asynchronous, and puts an emphasis on online discussions, peer-to-peer review and self-paced learning. The participants will be primarily responsible for their own learning over the span of the course. The course will consist of the following components:

- Compulsory and optional reading material, intended to teach the basic concepts and principles of the weekly modules.
- External links to additional books, articles, documents, and websites related to the modules.
- A glossary of terms and acronyms provided as a learning tool throughout the course.
- A Quiz at the end of each module.
- A compulsory report and peer-to-peer review to allow participants to internalize the essential learning points of the course.
- A Community Discussion Board will be available for participants to post questions or comments visible to the instructor and other participants. This discussion board will be moderated by the course mentor.
- Participants will receive a certificate after the completion of the course if they have a passing grade of 80% on all the quizzes and compulsory report including participation in the peer-to-peer review.

TARGETED AUDIENCE

This course targets public sector officials in charge of managing private sector development in African countries that
are eligible for assistance from BADEA (countries not members of the Arab League of States).