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SUCCESS STORY

Celebrating All Voices, Festival Promotes Cohesion by Embracing Diversity

Local Leaders Empowered to Build Sustainable Municipal-Community Engagement



The three-day Al Dhulail Gathers Us Festival provided an opportunity for thousands of community members to build common ground.

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Throughout the past several years, the structure of Jordan’s communities has been progressively altered due to regional conflicts. Once a largely Bedouin and tribal society, Jordan is now also a safe haven for refugee populations from several regional neighboring countries. This resulting historical series of events presents both political and social challenges for local governments seeking to promote harmony and to mitigate conflicts within their diverse communities - especially in the more rural municipalities.

Al Dhulail is one such municipality. Here the tribal legacy intertwines with the newer refugee population. Both groups are an integral part of the community but remain vulnerable to internal disputes and division. To foster community cohesion in complex environments like Al Dhulail’s, the USAID Jordan Cities Implementing Transparent, Innovative, and Effective Solutions (USAID CITIES) project works with local leaders and municipalities to embrace their diversity and create platforms that peacefully engage all segments of the community.

In one such initiative, USAID CITIES supported Al Dhulail Municipality in conducting a “first” for this diverse community. In support of the three-day local festival, “Al Dhulail Gathers Us”, a festival featuring awareness-raising sessions on combating extremism and drugs, explored how to better integrate all members of society - particularly refugees and people with disabilities. A center-piece for the festival was a celebration of the inauguration of Al Dhulail Municipality’s newly established park, “Prince Al Hussein Park.”

Recognition of the significance of this festival extended beyond the community with the region’s Governor, Mr. Mohammad Smeran, joining the newly elected Al Dhulail Mayor, Mr. Nidal Al Awadat, in a ribbon-cutting ceremony launching the festival. *“This initiative comes in line with His Majesty’s vision to empower local communities within the new Decentralization Law. Our partnership with the donor community in general, and with the USAID in particular, is paying off, and this festival is a great demonstration of it,”* said Mr. Smeran.

With the successful completion of the August elections, new local leaders are more empowered to engage their communities. Through local initiatives like “Al Dhulail Gathers US”, Mayor Al Awadat is seeing opportunities to make this happen. In his remarks at the opening ceremony, Mayor Al Awadat commented, *“This festival is a milestone in the history of Al Dhulail. We are delighted to see everyone come together in one place to celebrate their hometown and pave the way for a better Al Dhulail.”*

In addition to cultural folklore dances and informative plays, women of all ages gathered at the bazar tables to showcase their products — a vibrant display of savory dishes, colorful crochets, and shiny accessories.

Just as its name denotes, the festival signifies a moment in time where everyone in Al Dhulail came together not just for the magical three days; but with hopes of inspiring a long-term tradition of community unity in Al Dhulail Municipality – where all voices matter.