ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NETWORKING EXERCISE

Final Report

March 2007

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SUSTAINABLE ACHIEVEMENT OF BUSINESS EXPANSION AND QUALITY (SABEQ)

CONTRACT NUMBER: 278-C-00-06-00332-00

BEARINGPOINT, INC.

USAID/JORDAN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES OFFICE (EO)

MARCH 27, 2007

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5D.1.2.2 INSTITUTIONAL, LEADERSHIP, NETWORK AND SECTOR MAPPING PROCESSES

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1.1 EXECUTVE SUMMARY

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NETWORKING EXERCISE CARRIED OUT IN IRBID AND KARAK DURING JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2007.

The main purpose of this exercise was to identify leaders who could be wisely included in an Irbid and Economic Growth Council. In addition, the leadership mapping tool is used to "Improve the probability of overall success of the SABEQ project by increasing the awareness of staff and counterparts of local and national leadership structures".

THE NETWORKING ACHIEVED SEVERAL IMPORTANT RESULTS:

1. Identified and met with many relevant leaders and leadership groups – opinion and implementation leaders

2. Helped SABEQ team to understand the regional leadership groups and the formal/informal networks connecting them. Also, knowledge levels, attitudes and readiness to collaborate.

3. Intensively disseminated information about SABEQ and its approach. Established confidence in the approach.

4. Built momentum for SABEQ's project implementation. Opened collaborative dialogue

1.1   Better decisions regarding our involvement and participation in Irbid

   • E.g.: ED Council formation, timing

   • Guidance on shaping the implementation of the LED process.

7. Identified actions and messages that will generate high engagement and credibility

8. Specific suggestions for sectoral and thematic focus.

9. Have gotten a lot of people and organizations excited about and interested in SABEQ.

SOME OF THE KEY FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS:

- Best to start with task forces and actions, "test" leaders

- Irbid and Karak governorates are very receptive to SABEQ's role and approach.

  – Support for economic growth, sector focus, ED Council, partnership in project decisions

- Several sectors mentioned frequently: agriculture, transport & logistics, marble/stone, higher education, apparel/QIZ

- Little sense of strategic economic opportunity – strategic objectives and how competitive sectors will achieve Irbid's growth objectives

- Universities are not playing their role in building competitiveness

- V/T organizations are not playing an adequate role in building competitiveness

- Some concrete ideas for strategic actions: logistics center, agricultural produce preparation center

- Importance of other locations in the region

- Feeling that decisions are made in Amman; Irbid not involved

- Some difficult issues: co-opting; short-termism; unfortunate prior experiences

THE EXERCISE CONSISTED OF SEVERAL PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS

- Momentum and linkage with the community
- Combine with information from the economic baseline. Continue to inform strategic and LED planning
- Share information within SABEQ
- Task force and strategic planning leadership
- Starter set of key people for sectors and other vector dialogue
- Community/sector/cross-cutting interface
- Consider other applications of the mapping approach

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the economic development networking exercise implemented in Irbid by the SABEQ program.

The purpose of the Irbid networking exercise was to pave the way for SABEQ's program in the Irbid region by developing linkages with Irbid's leadership, generating interest and momentum, and identifying opinion and implementation leaders with whom SABEQ could work effectively.

This report concerns Irbid only. A second exercise is underway for Karak region.

The exercise was carried by the following personnel:

- Rana Al-Turk (Team Leader)
- Ahmad Alwan
- Mohammad Asfour
- Tulin Bakeer
- Nesreen Barakat
- Rami Khyami
- Sameera Qadoura
- Martin Webber (Advisor)

The approach used for the networking exercise was based on a methodology developed and implemented by J.E. Austin Associates, Inc. (JAA) in several other countries. J.E. Austin Associates is a member of the SABEQ consortium. Martin Webber, Executive Vice President of JAA, assisted the team to adapt the approach for Irbid, and provided training and guidance to the team.

3.1 ACHIEVED OBJECTIVES AND USES OF THE INFORMATION

<u>The mapping exercise achieved the original objectives, and several others</u>. The exercise achieved the original specific objective of identifying key leaders who could be wisely included in an Irbid Economic Development Council. The exercise also achieved the other initial objective *"to improve the probability of overall success of the SABEQ project by increasing the awareness of staff and counterparts of local and national leadership structures"*.

The impact and achievements of the networking exercise were significant:

1. Identified and met with many relevant leaders and leadership groups – opinion and implementation leaders. The consultations with the leaders have involved them in the economic development strategy and SABEQ initiatives.

2. Intensively disseminated information about SABEQ and its approach, to generate interest and partnership, and understanding of the collaborative opportunities. Built momentum for SABEQ's project implementation.

3. Helped SABEQ to understand the regional leadership groups and the formal/informal networks connecting them

4. Opened a collaborative dialogue between SABEQ and the Irbid governorate community

5. Identified opinion and implementation leaders who have the personal interests and qualities to provide active leadership in project task forces, or who will act as program and process advisors.

6. Established confidence within the Irbid community that SABEQ program's approach is to gather their input about their needs and goals, and jointly develop objectives and strategies - and not to impose plans.

In Irbid, the networking exercise is in part a prelude to the formation of a, economic development council as a partner for SABEQ. The insights from the network process helped SABEQ to decide to delay the council selection and formation for a few months, until SABEQ becomes better known in Irbid, some implementation activity is underway through task forces, and SABEQ obtains a clearer picture and testing of potential leaders.

(In Karak, the exercise followed the council selection. Hence the opinion and implementation leaders identified through the Karak will complement the Council, provide SABEQ with a wider base of leaders and collaborators to pane and implement with.)

Additional outcomes of the Exercise:

7. Provided the basis for better SABEQ decisions regarding the focus and details of the project's involvement in Irbid. (e.g. decisions on use of implementation task forces, timing of the Council startup, need for quick implementation wins)

8. Identified actions and messages that will generate high engagement and credibility

9. Helped SABEQ to understand knowledge levels, attitudes and readiness to collaborate.

10. Provided guidance on shaping the implementation of the LED process.   Identified areas of conceptual weakness and likely "buy-in" constraints, such as short-term versus long-term objectives, LED strategy versus individual projects, sectoral focus to achieve objectives versus cross-cutting issues and pet themes.

11. Specific suggestions for sectoral focus and thematic focus.

12. Have gotten a lot of people and organizations excited about and interested in SABEQ.

4.1 METHODOLOGY

The Exercise mapping was centered on interviews with a large number of individuals, who in turn recommended others as leaders and interviewees. We took care to identify and meet people from a number of key elements of the Irbid business, public sector, academic and civil society, and people from the districts outside of Irbid. The team identified several "vectors" – thematic communities within Irbid, and identified and interviewed people within each vector. The information and observations were recorded on an information template (annex) and on a computer-based mapping framework (annex)

We carried out more than 80 interviews in Irbid. The complete list is provided in Annex 2)

4.1.1. Specifically, the team carried out the following steps:

i. *Selection of vector:*

The exercise sought to identify leaders within various elements of the business community, government, education, NGOs and other participants in Irbid's economic fabric. There is intentionally substantial overlap amongst the vectors, so an individual might be part of several vectors).

The following vectors were selected or this exercise:

- Businesspeople: large business, SMEs, foreign investors, QIZ investors
- Business Associations
- Sector-specific: agriculture and animal industry, agribusiness (processing), printing, pharmaceuticals, apparel, renewable energy, education (vocational/technical training, education, higher education, technical centers, financial sector, health care, marble and stone, plastics, R&D, tourism)
- Civil and Religious
- Districts
- Development partners (and their funded projects)
- Government and Public Sector: Elected/Appointed officials, municipality, public sector
- Women
- Other political
- NGOs and other associations
- Media
- Behind-the-scenes leadership

ii.   *Content of the information template:*

The interviewer(s) completed an information template after each interview. The information includes:

- Name of Interviewer:
- Name of Person Interviewed:
- His/Her Contacts:
- Recommended by:
- Responsibilities:
- What makes him/her an opinion leader (in our opinion)?:
- Why is he/she important to SABEQ? (in our opinion)?:
- Known opinions and ideas (from our knowledge)?:
- Key network recommendations, and why:
- Needed follow up:
- Additional Notes:
- The person interviewed is part of which vectors?

iii.   *Initial selection of people to interview:*

These were identified through SABEQ's internal contacts and staff's knowledge, and by approaching several key organizations in Irbid. While the exercise emphasized meeting and discussing with people as individuals (rather than as representatives of organizations), several potential leaders do head prominent organizations. Also, it was inescapable in some cases to meet with individuals in the context of their organizations.

iv.   *Subsequent selection of people to interview;*

The team identified people for interviews in different vectors and from multiple starting points. The purpose of using multiple starting points was to avoid SABEQ being caught in a closed circle of friends, family members and others who simply recommend people in their own circles.

Each interviewee was asked to recommend people who he/she thought would be respected, dynamic and active in leading implementation of task forces for SABEQ activities, or to participate in SABEQ planning and strategy setting.

The interviewers were trained to probe for recommendations of valued, capable leaders, and to identify reasons why the interviewee believed that the persons that he/she was recommending would be effective leaders as partners to SABEQ.

It is always a challenge in a networking to know when you have interviewed enough people for your immediate purpose. We ended the current exercise when recommendations started became highly repetitious, indicating that the team had linked with a large proportion of the potential leadership. We are sure that many other leaders will emerge over time as SABEQ's activities gain traction, and the project should be very receptive to including them.

v. *Content of the interview*

The SABEQ interviewers conducted each interview as a discussion, although it was managed by the interviewer to bring out the elements as described in the template. The general outline of each meeting included:

- Explaining the networking exercise and why we are talking with the individual
- Discuss SABEQ: objectives, principles of implementation, how SABEQ will be evaluated, roll out plan
- Discuss the person's personal vision for Irbid, his/her sector, etc. Further discussion of topics that the person is particularly interested in.
- Identify potential sectors of strong economic growth possibility for Irbid.
- Discuss the interviewee's recommendations for opinion leaders who the SABEQ team should meet with

vi. *Record information in the template and mapping tool*

vii. *Identify people who were recommended repeatedly – these are potential opinion and implementation leaders*

The team also noted the interviewees who appeared to offer special individual qualities: sources of information, active visionaries, well-connected people who could provide good access and extensive networks, and action (implementation) leaders.

viii. *Periodic review meetings*

The team members held frequent meetings to test data and information, share and suggest approaches, make revisions in the mapping tool, identify priority vectors in which to conduct interviews, and to allocate assignments. These meetings were invaluable for coordination purposes, to develop a rounded understanding of Irbid, and to continually develop the exercise as an effective tool for SABEQ.

The team interacted on an ongoing basis with the various SABEQ components, identifying synergies and uses of the information. The exercise also contributed heavily to the planning and rollout of the regional approach in Irbid and Karak.
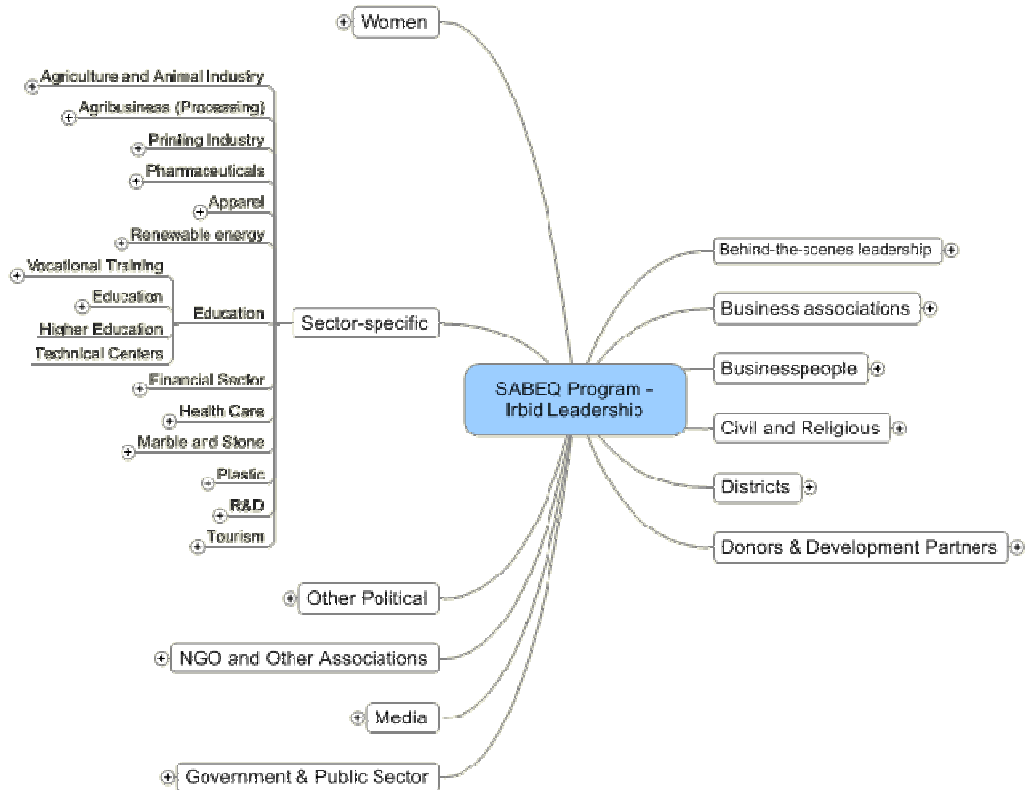
4.1.2. Mapping Tool

The team used the Mindjet Mindmanager Pro "mind mapping" tools to record and link the information, and to filter information, linkages and qualities.

The mapping tool is powerful, supple and very useful. The map acts as a resource or data center. It provides a data sorting capability, and a visual tool for communicating results and exploring applications for SABEQ components and cross cutting solutions.

The most frequent filters that SABEQ is likely to use SABEQ are:

- Frequency of recommendation of an individual
- Individuals by sector and other vectors
- Information about a single individual
- People with specific personal qualities noted by the interviewers

Within SABEQ, Rami Khyami and Tulin Bakeer are the two people who are most knowledgeable in managing the mapping tool. Rami will be the principal mapping tool and database manager.

4.1.3. What to do with the information?

The information, and indeed the collection process, has already informed SABEQ on many aspects of the planning and rollout of the regional activities. The findings and recommendations are discussed in Sections D and E, below)

Methodologically, the information collected should not remain hermetic or static. SABEQ staff will continually identify individuals (and impressions of those individuals) who could be added to the database. In doing so, the vectors within the database will be fleshed out, and will serve as useful covening and network information for sector and thematic SABEQ teams.

The information and approaches need to be actively shared within SABEQ. The enterprise networking team's observations and insights need to be available to all the SABEQ components. This need for sharing information of course has not been forgotten, but now that the Irbid network mapping exercise is essentially complete, the information and implications need to be actively shared through ongoing discussions and collaborative planning.

The information about and impressions of potential leaders needs to be tested and updated going forward. One or two meetings with an individual, and references from several interviewees, are a good start towards forming an impression of an individual as a potential leader within SABEQ's programming. By involving these people in SABEQ's discussions and implementation, we will learn more and identify those who are the stars. Also, as we meet more and more people, we will identify additional collaborators.

The networking approach and mapping tool offer opportunities for additional uses within SABEQ. These are also discussed later in this report. (Section 6)

4.1.4. Methodological issues to take into account

    i.   As mentioned, <u>SABEQ needs to test much of the information and observation through SABEQ experience in working with the identified potential leaders</u>.

    ii.   <u>A name, mentioned frequently, does not guarantee that this person is a leader.</u> Experience from other network mapping exercises demonstrates that identifying respected leaders by "triangulation" – multiple recommendations by other leaders – is a successful means to identify effective opinion leaders

and partners. SABEQ obviously has to get to know the person, and see him/her in action.

iii. <u>The information from this networking exercise needs to be combined with other sources of information regarding Irbid</u>. SABEQ's planning and implementation will in particular also need to make use of baseline economic and other data about Irbid (already being collected).

iv. <u>When met individually, interviewees tended to be more expansive in offering personal opinions and recommendations</u>. Some interviewees were not particularly open or expansive when they were representing their official institutions.

v. <u>Some institutions were clearly pushing SABEQ to operate under their umbrella</u>, and were suggesting names from their own circles of interests. We made no commitments.

vi. <u>Experience showed that the process benefited from interaction and periodic meetings amongst the team</u>, and that interviewers become "overloaded" if they had to conduct too many interviews in quick succession. The planned process was to a tight schedule, and was probably too aggressive.   Reflection sessions from time to time are needed to ensure proper planning for next meetings. We monitored the process quite well, and adapted it as needed.

vii. <u>We identified, during the course of the exercise, that it would be useful to speak with people in other municipalities in the Governorate.</u>   Of course, they are part of the Irbid region; but also, there are important economic and other linkages binding Irbid with the other municipalities.

viii. <u>The networking exercise helped to identify the wisdom of not rushing to form a council, but to engage leaders through strategy sessions, workshops and implementation activities, to identify individuals for a council formation in a few months time</u>. At its start, the networking exercise was quite focused on identifying leaders to participate in a regional council.

ix. <u>The decision to avoid a direct focus on interviewing for the purpose of selecting a council allowed the exercise to be much richer and more productive in introducing and building support for SABEQ, and sharing information.</u>

x. <u>A decision will need to be made on the level of confidentiality with which to hold the information from the exercise.</u> Opinion and impressions about individuals should certainly be kept with very restricted access.

5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: DISCUSSION OF MAIN THEMES, ISSUES, COMMENTS

5.1.1 Receptivity to SABEQ

The people interviewed in Irbid were very receptive to SABEQ, and to the opportunity to meet to discuss SABEQ's role in Irbid.

Most people interviewed were interested in SABEQ's approach, and welcomed the emphasis in Irbid's stakeholders being able to define their priorities. They also welcomed the opportunity to be given support to lead their own implementation. Nonetheless, it will be a hurdle to truly transfer implementation responsibility to task forces and their leadership.

5.1.2 Potential Leaders

The network process identified 26 individuals who stand out as possible opinion and implementation leaders. The SABEQ team interviewed these people, and confirmed the possibility of engaging them in SABEQ's activities.

26 Names were repeated for minimum 2 times and maximum 6 times

Categories / Legend:

<mark>Mentioned more than 6 times:</mark>

- Repeated 4-5 times: **7 names were repeated**
- Repeated < 6 times: **1 name was repeated (his name was repeated 12 times)**
- Repeated 2-3 times: **18 names were repeated**

These individuals are certainly primary candidates to participate in a regional council. Further "testing" of their qualities will be important – through additional meetings and ideally by including them in implementation task forces for early SABEQ activities. Others potential leaders will also undoubtedly be identified as SABEQ becomes active in IRBID.

The networking also identified a number of organizations that will likely be important collaborators for SABEQ's program in Irbid and Karak :

Irbid Chamber of Commerce	Karak Chamber of Commerce
Irbid Chamber of Industry	Women Associations
Irbid Women Forum	Karak Tourism visiting Center
Jordan Innovation Center	Karak Municipality
Yarmouk University	Karak Agriculture Union

5.1.3   Selection of the Economic Development Council

Irbid is a big city and governorate, with many organizations related to SABEQ's work. The networking exercise has identified many individuals as potential leaders. However, participation in a USAID-funded program like SABEQ is new to many, and the cause of some disquiet in some circles. SABEQ will want to ensure that the Council is selected to include highly committed leaders who both understand SABEQ's approach, and who have demonstrated their willingness to assume leadership. Just being on the Council to represent an organization is not sufficient (but may be unavoidable in some cases).

The team therefore has suggested that the selection and startup of the Council be delayed for a few months (perhaps until June). In this time, SABEQ will commence on-the-ground activities through task forces, and will be able to identify a number of leaders who are truly committed to the process, and who can mobilize others' interest.

5.1.4   Economic Sectors and Comparative Advantages

The discussions identified a number of productive sectors that could be the focus of SABEQ's Component 4 and LED activities in Irbid. Focus sectors would also serve as the sectoral economic basis around which Irbid would measure its competitiveness success.

These sectors (and subsectors) will of course need more investigation and assessment before SABEQ decides whether they merit attention and focus. The baseline economic assessment is important. Agriculture, transport & logistics, tertiary education, marble & stone and apparel (and other QIZ-based industry) were amongst the most frequently mentioned sectors, and appear to be of potentially high importance as possible generators of economic growth for Irbid.

5.1.5   Several other sectors were mentioned to lesser degree in the interviews:

- Construction and housing
- Tourism
- Packaging materials
- Food industries (agro-processing)
- Financial services
- R&D
- Plastic fitting, printing and renewable energy were mentioned by few people
- Medical cluster

5.1.6   Various comments about specific economic sectors

The networking exercise did not include any significant assessment of specific sectors, nor was there any structured approach to investigated the details of specific sectors. Nonetheless, each interview of course incorporated discussions of Irbid's economy, and individual businesspeople discussed various business opportunities.

Some of the specific comments gleaned from the interviews are provided below. They are entirely anecdotal or interpretive in nature:

i.   *Agriculture*

- Olive oil, grapes, apples specifically mentioned

- Olive oil was frequently mentioned; some suggested a local branding initiative

ii.   *Apparel*

- Attracting and retaining employees is a major concern. QIZ manufacturers have tried and/or considered a number of approaches to encouraging women from the regions to work in the factories (transport, chaperoning, etc). This could be the focus of an early SABEQ initiative.

- At least one company suggested that provision of medical insurance to factory workers would help to retain employees. The company said that it would be willing to pay for the cost (most of the workers are young and single) for government-provided insurance.

- Many people do not appreciate the benefits received from apparel investments – e.g. large number of jobs, steady income and capital invested in QIZ companies, and the benefits to their region and families. There is also frequently a lack of recognition that the support of the Irbid region is important to the success and continuation of the QIZ investments.

- A communication council was established years ago to attract Jordanians to the apparel industry; however, this committee is not active anymore.

iii.   *Education*

- Irbid has a sizable educational cluster that includes: public and private universities, Internet centers, community colleges, V/T schools, research centers and more.   Irbid is proud of the high level of education of its populations, and the fact that it has the "most dense population of college students in Jordan (50,000 students in 10 sq km).

- Education can be viewed as a service to business – a participant in specific industry clusters – as well as its own economic and even export sector.

- Many interviewees speak of a strong link between academia and industry in Irbid. Some factories have practical linkages with academia in developing production lines. Several people mentioned the desirability of such linkages – there appears to be demand for developing such linkages. There is an active Consulting Center at JUST.

- However, the quality and focus of these linkages and the programs appears to be suspect. There is little evidence of any true strategic partnership (focused on defined strategic objectives).

iv.   *Transport and logistics*

- Transport and logistics can be an important supporting service to other industries, as well as its own productive economic sector.

- Irbid is an important transportation hub between the three neighboring countries (Syria, Israel, and Iraq), as well as possibly Palestine and Lebanon.   Several interviewees saw opportunity in developing Irbid further as a hub for the region. They felt that it was very important to upgrade transportation services and facilities.

- The transport sector currently employs considerable numbers within the Ramtha area in particular, and people of the area dominate the sector in other parts of the country.   They have extensive international linkages in their trade activities.

5.1.7   Workforce Development

- Many of the people and organizations that the team met with were interested in workforce development issues. In many cases, that was the programmatic mandate of the person's organization - so that emphasis is natural.

- As with higher education, there is wide recognition of the desirability of effective linkages between skills providers and business; that V/T and other providers need to provide graduates with the skills needed by competitive business.

- And there is little indication that the skills provider-business linkage is a strong one. Current programs seem ad hoc and uncoordinated.

- Many of the suggestions and initiatives underway regarding workforce development are focused on basic skills, micro and small enterprise. Relatively few are substantially in the context of strategic sectoral emphasis. Several people and organizations had particular emphasis on finding new economic opportunities for women (handicrafts and food processing projects were in particular mentioned)

- One interviewee suggested that an agriculture vocational training center would be valuable to Irbid. This would reportedly be the only such center in Jordan.

- There was also a suggestion to establish a training center for associations in Irbid and the center focus would be management capacity building.

- Much of Irbid business is small and unsophisticated. Many business owners are not able to expand because they lack management, marketing and sales capacity.

- SABEQ could immediately (i.e. even before sector and regional strategies are defined) implement activities related to human resources development.

5.1.8   Organizations and Relationships in Irbid

- Irbid is commercially busy city, has many educated people, a lot of shopping places, relatively good food, Internet cafes. It has long been a trading hub, and is the location for many QIZ and other investments.

- Regional communities
  o There is marked difference in the level of development between Irbid city and the other populations centers in the Governorate. There is also a lot of variation amongst the communities outside of Irbid. There are also significant commercial and economic linkages. There are some key opinion leaders outside of Irbid city. Thus, for the networking mapping exercise, we had to go beyond the immediate circle of Irbid town (especially to Al Aghwar).

  o SABEQ will need to engage the municipalities outside Irbid city within its regional programming. This should likely take many forms, including participation in vision setting and strategy development, skills development, linkages with sector strategies, and removal of transactions costs.

- Nature of the private sector, its attitudes and its organizations
  o Many people work in Amman and live in Irbid. But it works the other way, too. Many owners of businesses in Irbid live in Amman. So SABEQ and the regional strategy need to find mechanisms to engage these businesspeople and investors, to ensure that they are contributing and are deeply involved in Irbid's ongoing economic growth?

  o Irbid has two chambers of commerce and industry. The Chamber of Commerce seems to play a key role in the community development of Irbid. Irbid Chamber of Industry also plays an important role with relation to

industries, especially the QIZs. The heads of these two organizations were each recommended to SABEQ by several interviewees.

- o There is a clear separation and economic groups divided in Irbid with clear no collaboration and strong competition. MW note: Please help me understand this statement better.

- o There is little evident sense of business partnerships and, and there is weak understanding of the economic opportunities that could be created through sector development approaches such as value chain practices. There was little evidence for dynamic, strongly collaborative focus on Irbid's economic future. Most people interviewed appeared to stress short termist perspective – emphasizing personal "pet" projects and short-term, return for Irbid, rather than the value of long term investment.

- o There is a general consensus that the "culture of shame" issue is a serious one in the governorate, but few concerted or coordinated efforts to find long-term solutions or to understand its main reasons. The QIZ investors have tried several ways to make QIZ employment more attractive to people in the governorate.

- Nature of the public sector and its organizations

  - o Some interviewees felt that the Government plays a more influential role in Irbid than does the private sector. They argued that Government mentality in Irbid should change as "they go by the book". Many interviewees, when asked to think of approaches or ideas, immediately said that "the Government should …."

  - o There does not seem to be much coordination amongst various public agencies, especially on issues related to economic growth. There was no evidence of concerted strategic focus.

  - o Arabic language should be used always while working with the Governorates.

- Policies, regulation and business environment

  - o Ideas for Irbid's future face a "wall of legislation and regulation", and the business community sees this as being very hard to change. Interviewees felt that legislators listen to authorities and key leaders in Amman, and that law changes, modifications and recommendations come from Amman. They do not feel like they have much input or advocacy power.

  - o Some interviewees believe that several laws and regulations are mutually contradictory.

- About USAID and donor-funded programs; Relations with SABEQ

  - o Organizations and people interviewed expressed admiration for the dynamic and consistent outreach and follow-up from SABEQ. Most of interviewed individuals are keen to work with SABEQ and expect to be involved in any later steps. (The SABEQ mapping team suggests inviting all interviewed

individuals for a half-day workshop or similar event. This will maintain and build their interest, help them to recognize partnership in SABEQ (and trust that we will carry through on or promises), engage them in the next steps, and remind them of their role in working with SABEQ to improve Irbid's economic prospects.

- o The mapping methodology demonstrated to interviewees that SABEQ is different from previous approaches, which depend on centralized planning decisions, in determining the priorities and needs of the Governorates. They are excited that SABEQ's approach is to give the local community the chance to participate in drawing up the strategic vision for the development of their Governorate.

- o Many people naturally hope that SABEQ will be a source of finance for their projects and operations. The interviewers responded to such questions with the message that they should not look at SABEQ as a source of funding, but as a source of expertise, technical assistance and similar facilities. Still, a clear message needs to be delivered in this respect, and all SABEQ staff should provide a consistent message.

- o Amongst those interviewed, there is some awareness of various USAID activities in the Governorate of Irbid.

- o Several people interviewed expressed concern at having another donor program, without knowing what has been accomplished in the past. There was lack of awareness of ongoing economic promotion activities in general. Some interviewees have had disappointing experiences with donor-funded programs, and openly expressed dissatisfaction. (IRADA is seen as a good program.)

- o Therefore, expectations from SABEQ are high. People want to see how SABEQ is different, and how SABEQ will impact them as individuals. We established a good level of confidence within the Irbid community that SABEQ program's approach is to gather their input about their needs and share decision-making, not to impose plans. One-to-one meetings made the interviewees feel their importance as individuals to SABEQ program and made them realize the importance of their feedback, which also made them committed to the provided information.

- o Some meetings were cancelled at the last moment (while the interviewers were in the field) disconcerting and disappointing to the interviewers, but a surprisingly small number in Martin's view. However, the Mayor cancelled 4 times without credible reason. This is certainly a cause for concern.

- o Some interviewees stated that the donor agencies waste time and money on studies and on cars, consultants and events in five-star hotels. They would like to see actual implementation from SABEQ Program. The way they see 'implementation' is in actual projects that will not only eliminate poverty and unemployment, but also improve the quality of life for the community.

- About an Economic Development Council
  - o Many interviewees felt that the already existing executive and consultative councils are not effective with respect to guiding efforts top improve Irbid's

economic growth and welcomed the idea of establishing an economic development council for Irbid. Several felt that most members of the Executive Council are traditional employees or people in organizational positions who became members of this Council "with time", although they are not decision makers or implementers. Many interviewees criticized the way the Consultative Councils are formulated, because they believe that the formulation of the Council does not include the selection of qualified members.

- <u>About a Regional Strategy</u>
  - Interviewees felt that there is no strategic vision, nor clear action strategy, for the development of Irbid, and welcomed the idea of formulating one.
  - The team felt that there was little indication that Irbid's universities and other educational and skills-providing organizations were in close strategic collaboration (or even discussion) with business, nor vice versa. While all parties acknowledge the value of collaboration and strategic objectives – and some express that they are working towards this end – there is little reason to think that at this time, collaboration or dialogue have any truly directed momentum towards setting and achieving clearly defined strategic objectives for Irbid's economy, or for the sectors on which Irbid's economic future will depend.
  - Some interviewees expressed a need for an economic information center. Many emphasized the need to foster economic communication channels among local partners.
  - People in general were very supportive to idea of "branding" regional economy and competitiveness.
  - There was fear in some sectors regarding competitors in Amman or from new entrants to the Irbid market, because they would have more capital and experience than those currently operating in Irbid.
  - Some interviewees said that land zoning was mismanaged between industrial, agricultural and residential usage. Few interviewees had any knowledge of the industrial map, investment map, and the use of a land map.

6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS FOR SABEQ

We suggest several process recommendations for SABEQ in making effective use of the networking exercise results and learning:

1. The Economic Development Network Mapping Exercise accumulated many opinions and ideas, as expressed in this report.   SABEQ should consider these in planning and implementing its strategies and actions. However, the reader should realize that it is impossible to express all ideas and impressions in writing. Therefore, SABEQ's personnel should involve members of the Irbid networking team in ongoing component planning discussions. They have accumulated a lot of information and perception that will be useful in any actions touching on Irbid.

2. Share the accumulated information within SABEQ. However, be cautious of making the team's internal opinions of individuals too widely available.

3. Involve the various components, in collaboration with the LED component, in strategy and action plan development in Irbid.

4. In particular, work with Component 4 to identify sector-focused strategies and actions, specific to Irbid, that will enable Irbid to achieve clear strategic economic objectives.

5. Develop a clear message/response and approach for dealing with pressures to provide funds for pet projects, and attempts by specific organizations (and even companies) to co-opt SABEQ.

6. Consider similar mapping exercises on a sectoral basis (and perhaps others).

7. Involving identified potential leaders in task forces will provided impetus to the task force actions, and will allow SABEQ to see who emerges as strong partners.

8. SABEQ will probably want to begin toe establish the Irbid Economic Growth Council during the third quarter of 2007. Our knowledge of the qualities and capacities of the "tested" leadership will be an excellent guide as to who could usefully be named to the Council.

9. It is important for SABEQ to get short term actions underway - while in parallel working on the medium and longer term results.

10. SABEQ will place employees in Irbid, and this will greatly facilitate make this process easier, since these employees already live in Irbid. They will need to be updated on the results of the mapping, and included of course in LED planning (and other component planning as appropriate).

11. The Irbid mapping exercise should be regarded as complete. However, SABEQ should continue to develop the database, at least over the next six months. In particular, adding information about new people that SABEQ meets and works with will allow the database to be a very useful resource for ongoing planning and implementation of initiatives in Irbid. For example, contacts in specific sectors (and other vectors) can be added continually.

12.   The biggest process lesson has perhaps been that SABEQ's decision to use the exercise as a means to introduce itself to the community, and to learn about the community, has provided many benefits that are tremendously facilitating the startup of SAQBEQ activities in Irbid.