



SUCCESS STORY

Ghour Al-Safi: Turning Challenges into Opportunities

The community was part of the problem, and now they became part of the solution



H.E. Ms. Ghaida Diesat, Head of Al-Ghour Al-Safi's Local Council

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As with many heads of local councils around the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, H.E. Ms. Ghaida Diesat (prefers to go by “Um Hayat”), a newly elected Head of Al-Ghour Al-Safi’s Local Council, was struck with the limited resources available to deliver the much-needed services to her community, “We couldn’t clean and maintain the streets of our town with a population of 30,000 people. The garbage was everywhere, while we only have four compression garbage trucks and one electric crane”, Um Hayat stated. “The community is not cooperating and it was nearly a mission impossible”.

To address the accumulated garbage problem, the municipality had two options; they could either procure more dump trucks with funds they did not have, or reach out to the community to cooperate with them in cleaning the streets. On February 2018, USAID CITIES team held a series of municipal community outreach sessions at the Southern Aghwar municipality for the local community, municipal staff, and the newly established Municipal Community Outreach Group. The sessions addressed the importance of adopting municipal community communication and outreach channels that facilitate cooperation between the municipality and the community to improve municipal services. The sessions also enabled the municipality to explore new and innovative ideas to ensure community cooperation and engagement.

As a participant during these USAID-supported sessions, Um Hayat found a source of guidance to aid her in acquiring the knowledge she needed to execute the many ideas she had on establishing and promoting municipal-community partnership. Instead of having the community only see themselves as recipients of services; Um Hayat decided to launch an initiative called “**Our neighborhood is Cleaner**” by spreading awareness amongst community members and initiating an in-person outreach to earn their support in defining a path to cleaner communities. “I met with five different neighborhoods several times. I used every technique and available channels of communication that I learned from the USAID-CITIES sessions to convey one main message: A Clean neighborhood is everybody’s responsibility”.

Um Hayat didn’t only “flash the penalty card” for those who contributed to the garbage problem, she also adopted a positive reinforcement approach and ran a contest for all neighborhoods to participate. “The community was part of the problem, and I made them part of the solution”, Um Hayat said. “Now, they are nominating active figures amongst them to be acknowledged during the ceremony”, she added. The Southern Aghwar municipality held an acknowledgement ceremony to celebrate members of the community who worked hard to keep the streets clean. “I can’t thank the USAID team enough. They didn’t give us the equipment needed to clean the streets, but they certainly taught us how to think strategically and sustainably”. “**Our neighborhood is Cleaner**” is an initiative that Um Hayat hopes to be replicated throughout the Southern Aghwar Region.