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Photo: Ministry of Local Administration's Director of Local Development, Ms. Areej Zuraigat, often has to take her planning work home. Photo by Ms. Zuraigat.

How Are Women Leaders at the Ministry of Local Administration (MOLA) Facilitating Local Development?

The Ministry of Local Administration's Director of Local Development, Ms. Areej Zuraigat, is a senior women leader at the ministry whose goal is to create jobs and economic growth across the country's 100 municipalities. Success in this role has been a result of MOLA's vision towards local administration as well as her driving change in how municipalities plan for future economic development. She has partnered with the USAID Cities Implementing Transparent, Innovative, and Effective Solutions (CITIES) Project and Municipal Local Development Units (MLDU) to expand municipal planning to better engage the local community, explore investment opportunities, and coordinate more closely with stakeholders in and outside the government on economic growth.

Engaging the local community in the planning process is critical. She noted that, "the more community members engage in the planning process, the more they feel ownership of the plan. Then they are proud to see the plan and their priorities reflected in their own community." It particularly pleases her to see the virtuous cycle local planning creates. The community monitors the municipality to see how the plan comes to fruition, and then "next planning cycle they are even more engaged – really wanting to improve their community."

Reflecting on her accomplishments, Ms. Zuraigat is positive about the progress she and her ministry team have made in incorporating the local development process into how municipalities plan for economic growth. But she is always thinking about the future, "the planning process is the critical first step, but just as important is implementing the plan." She is confident that with her team and support from the USAID CITIES Project she will be able to ensure that municipalities continue to execute their action plans to create economic growth.

USAID's work with the Ministry of Local Administration is part of a broad partnership between municipalities, the ministry, and USAID to help the municipalities better serve their communities.