SUCCESS STORY

Inducing Change Through USAID-MOMA Knowledge Partnership

Elham Zobi from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs joins USAID CITIES' team in identifying new communication and outreach tools between the MoMA, New Ruwaished Municipality, and the community.

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In 2006, when Elham Zobi joined the local development unit as a Social Researcher at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MOMA), government departments operated across the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on a centralized basis. To many like Elham, this meant only limited communication with MOMA's primary clients - the municipalities - and even less communication with the local community. To carry out tasks related to municipal loans and distribution of projects; Elham and her colleagues used conventional means of communication to reach out to municipal officials across the Kingdom. "*As the employees of the Local Development Unit at MOMA, we managed funding opportunities, municipal databases, and donor projects targeting municipalities only through official letters and formal meetings and visits,*" says Elham.

But, with the advent of the decentralization elections of 2017 and the implied changes in ways of doing business, new challenge emerged. In order to empower new local governments and their communities to effectively respond to their needs, priorities, and complaints; new communication mechanisms would have to be adopted and with those new mechanisms, additional human capacities would also need to be developed. In response to these needs, the USAID Jordan Cities Implementing Transparent, Innovative, and Effective Solutions (USAID-CITIES) Project partnered with MOMA to form a MOMA-led taskforce to support the municipalities.

The task force immediately joined the USAID-CITIES' team in supporting the Municipalities' Municipal Community Outreach Groups to hold meetings between the municipalities and their communities that were followed by a series of communications strategy-development consultative sessions with representatives of municipal and local councils. MOMA decided to assign some of their younger representatives to the task force who could participate in these sessions as municipalities discussed and prioritized municipal community outreach tools with their communities.

MOMA's presence served three objectives. First; it presented young MOMA staff with the opportunity to enhance their practical experience and knowledge of community engagement and secondly, to sharpen their capacity to potentially emulate this process within

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MOMA's staff provide their knowledge and insight with representatives from Ajloun Municipality, Municipal Council, and the community on how to identify the right tools of communications between MOMA, the municipalities, and the community.

the non-USAID CITIES' targeted municipalities. Finally, and most importantly, MOMA had a better opportunity to demonstrate its commitment and support to the decentralization process that is ideally built on a municipal-community dialogue that ultimately leads to a decentralized decision that benefits the communities. "Our presence in these sessions reflected our support and commitment to exploring new ideas of communicating amongst each other," says Elham.

By participation in a process of identifying and building these key outreach channels between MOMA, the municipality, and the community; MOMA's staff were able to provide on-the-spot guidance and responses to municipalities and their local community. "*USAID CITIES has provided us with the platform to share our knowledge with the municipalities and communities, address their complaints and questions, and build sustainable linkages with them,*" says Elham. "*These sessions gave us the chance to self-adapt to the new dynamics of local governments and adjust our approach towards municipalities to create better communication mechanisms in the future,*" she adds.

MOMA's commitment to this enhanced approach with local and municipal councils' representatives has brought its staff closer to municipal leadership and staff. It also demonstrated the need to sustain open communication between MOMA and the municipalities and to support the development of more effective communication mechanisms and tools. And with MOMA's skilled staff like Elham, these mechanisms will continue long after the USAID CITIES project ends.