

## Civic Participation and Local Development: Building Effective Communities in Jordan

**Event:** International Workshop  
**Date/Place:** May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010, Yarmuk University - Irbid  
**Conception:** Dr. Khaled Awamleh, Dr. Martin Beck  
**Organisation:** KAS Amman, Visions Center For Strategic and Development Studies

### 1. Program Overview

**Wednesday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

#### Opening Session

Visions Center for Strategic And Development Studies Amman - Jordanien	Dr. Khaled Al-Awamleh
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Resident Representative of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Amman - Jordanien	Dr. Martin Beck
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President of Yarmuk University Irbid - Jordanien	Dr. Sultan Abu Oraby
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Governor, Local Development Directorate Ministry of Interior Amman - Jordan	Dr. Raed Al-Adwan
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Governor of Irbid Jordanien	Khaled Abu Zeid
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#### First Session: Municipalities, women, youth and private sector participation in Local Development

Decentralisation and Local Public Administration in Jordan	Dr. Raad Al-Adwan Governor, Local Development Directorate Ministry of Interior, Amman - Jordan
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Building a Municipality: How to assure participation of men and women alike in Local Development	Dr. Renate Reiter Professor for Political Sciences, University of Hagen - Germany
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The role of private sector in local development	Dr. Khaled Al-Wazzani President of Darat Holding, Co.
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Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

**AUSLANDSBÜRO JORDANIEN**

**June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010**

LEA COLLET  
MICHAEL TAUCH  
DR. MARTIN BECK

Moderator

Dr. Izzat Hijab  
Dean, Faculty of Journalism  
Yarmouk University, Irbid - Jordan

**Second Session: Decentralization and empowering civic society in Jordan**

The Monitor of the Central Authority over  
Local Councils

Dr. Amjad Al-Shraideh  
Judge-North Amman Court

Role of Civic Society in Local Development  
Progress in Jordan

Dr. Khaled Al-Shoqran  
ALRAI Institute Irbid

Moderator

Dr. Mohammad Shawqi  
Political Science Department,  
Cairo University, Egypt

**Final Discussion**

Moderator: Dr. Raed Al-Adwan

Governor Khaled Abu Zeid  
Dr. Jihad Abu Al-Sondos  
Dr. Martin Beck  
Dr. Khaled Al-Awamleh  
Dr. Renate Reiter  
Abd Arrayaq Attal  
Dr. Mohamed Shawqi

**2. Objectives**

With the first competitive elections in 1989 Jordan's late King Hussein paved the way for enhancing the political participation, which is a substantial component of a functioning political system. King Abdullah II initiated the first measures to improve the political, social and economic framework on the way of fair political participation. He therefore founded a royal commission in 2005 to work out a decentralization plan for Jordan's political system. This plan aims at enhancing the political participation of citizens on the local community level, thereby creating an open, transparent and citizen-friendly political system and delegating power from the highly centralized government bureaucracy to the governorate and community level. Though it may be the main objective of the regime to stabilize the prevalent political order with its limited opportunities of political participation, Jordan's citizens should take the government by its word and should seize the chance of widening the civic participation. During the workshop on May 26<sup>th</sup>, organized by KAS Amman

and the Visions Center for Strategic and Development Studies at Yarmuk University in Irbid, participants and experts exchanged ideas and opinions on local development. The topics discussed covered, among others, the fair representation of men and women on the local level, the role of the private sector and of population in local development, the decentralisation project of the government and the central government's role in the process of decentralisation.

**3. Course of the event**

**Dr. Khaled Awamleh**, Director of the Visions Center, opened the workshop. In his welcoming speech he talked about the key role of the university in the field of regional and local development. The mission of the university should not only be to produce new knowledge, impart and apply it, but also to promote human resources as the basis of social development. The training of stakeholders and experts in economy, politics and society is one of the most impor-

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tant pillars of sustainable national and regional development.

**Dr. Martin Beck**, Resident Representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Amman, pointed out that the workshop can be traced back to the promising initiative of King Abdullah II to decentralize the political decision-making process in Jordan.

However, this decentralization process should further enhance the capacities of municipalities and strengthen the participation on the local level. The government should therefore take measures to help citizens getting the opportunity to take part in the decision-making processes and to implement their interests on the local level. Hence, the government has to provide the municipalities and governorates with the necessary financial means.

Both **Dr. Awamleh** and **Dr. Beck** stated that the KAS-Visions Center workshop is particularly important as it is the first coordinated effort between the government, represented by the directory of the local development at the ministry of interior, municipalities, local media, institutions of higher education and advocacy groups to organize a joint event on local development and civic participation in governorates and local communities.

**Dr. Al-Adwan** stressed in his welcoming statement the essential role of decentralisation as the most important component in local development. Cooperation between public and private sector is an important prerequisite for the implementation of the government's decentralisation agenda. In order to achieve efficient and sustainable local development, the administration has to take measures of political and social restructuring. In this way the democratic structure of the government and the administration and a modern infrastructure would be fostered.

**Dr. Abu Oraby**, President of Yarmuk University, presented different aspects of the concept of local development. While the concept of development was first under-

stood as economic development only, today the developmental approaches and initiatives comprise political, social, cultural and human development. A participatory approach is very important to establish institutional capacities and encourage local development, especially regarding the 21<sup>st</sup> century's challenges and the technological, economical, social and cultural acceleration processes that take place under the influence of globalisation. To conclude, he highlighted the growing importance of the university in the cooperation between government, private sector and local communities.

**Khaled Abu Zeid**, Governor of Irbid governorate, pointed at the social and economic cleavages between the twelve governorates in Jordan. Nevertheless, he stated that the government's decentralisation plan is a first important step towards a cultural, economic and social basis for effective, democratic governance. Moreover, it could bridge socio-economical cleavages and support constructive relations between political institutions and an engaged and organised civic society.

**Dr. Al-Adwan** presented in his lecture on "Decentralization and Local Administration" the decentralization plan of the government. Since 2009, a new committee has been working on compiling the financial, political, organizational and judicial framework for the implementation of the decentralization plan. Decentralization envisions a delegation of power, capacities and resources on the governmental and communal level.

The capabilities and financial means of the 12 governorates have to be strengthened in such a way as to enable the civil society to participate in the political life of the state at all levels. Yet, the huge socioeconomic gap between the rural and urban population shows that the decisions of the government do not always reflect the needs and priorities of the citizens.

**Dr. Renate Reiter** presented in the following different options to design participation in local communities. She stated that there

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are differences between traditional forms of political representation such as in presidential or parliamentary systems of government and new forms of participation. She then focused on participation of men and women in local elections and their representation in local institutions. Regarding the passive vote, there are nearly no differences between men and women; both sexes are affected by a significant decline of participation in elections and in political interest in Germany. In comparison to France, where there is a balanced representation of men and women in local councils and high rank executive positions, women are underrepresented in Germany. In the following, **Dr. Reiter** then discussed reasons for unequal representation in local councils: mainly, equal representation depends on the form of election law. Contrary to the system of majority voting, proportional representation abets balanced active participation. Besides, quotas in political parties should secure career opportunities for women. Moreover, an unequal representation of men and women prevails in local political and social networks. Unequal time resources and gender-specific tasks inhibit equal representation of man and women in politics, economy and society. Quotas, party competition, strategies of parties and social networks that improve career opportunities of women and new forms of grassroots democracy promote a more equal representation on the local and national level.

**Dr. Al-Wazzani** focused in his lecture on the concept of corporate social responsibility. This concept assumes that the capacity and overall performance of a company can be enhanced by taking social responsibility. Through social, ecological and economic contributions that go beyond legal obligations of the government, companies can increase economic wealth, environmental quality and social capital. The private sector plays therefore an important role in local development since companies create jobs and training opportunities, improve infra-

structure, provide part of the budget for developmental projects, improve government services through cooperation with the public sector, contribute to research and support people's participation in communal planning. Local development therefore is not only a central task of government, but also becomes a paramount mission of the private sector.

In the subsequent discussion, the question came up, whether the companies' social expenses should be paid into a governmental fund so that their use could be better controlled.

In this context, **Dr. Al-Wazzani** pointed out that laws for a better allocation of social expenses of companies could be a useful steering instrument. Governorates have to steer and observe the allocation.

**Dr. Al-Shraideh** began his speech with a comparison of centralism and decentralisation. While centralism means that all competences in a state are concentrated in one central government authority, decentralisation refers to political reforms which aim at shifting administrative, political and fiscal functions to the regional and local level of administration. In this way, participation of the population in all relevant aspects is encouraged. In administrative decentralisation, administrative tasks are delegated to the regional level, which is in charge with the implementation, while the decision-making power stays with the ministries at the national level.

**Dr. Al-Shraideh** then discussed the role of municipal councils and their power. It is important that, in the context of decentralisation measures, transparent competition mechanisms and checks and balances between the different levels allow for accountability and participative monitoring.

**Dr. Al-Shoqran** presented the population's role in local development and the obstacles that might inhibit an active participation in the political decision-making process on the local and national level. He named several criteria, like democratic government struc-

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tures that have to be met by government to create mechanisms of civic participation and to promote local development. The problem in Jordan is that civic society organisations are often seen as a threat to the political system and social stability. Nevertheless, these organisations play an important role in local development as they defend citizen rights and articulate the needs of the people. Yet, the general performance of civic society organisations in the Middle East is not sufficient to effectively work together with government and citizens.

At the end of the workshop, **Dr. Beck** stressed that the Jordanian governorates and local communities need more financial support from the central government.

**Dr. Al-Adwan** explained that the results of the workshop and the feed back on the government's decentralization plan would be communicated to the Ministry of Interior. Finally, **Dr. Al-Wazzani** asserted that the private sector has to play an even more important role in local development and that the allocation of companies' social expenses has to be observed by the government.

#### **4. Conclusion**

As a first coordinated effort between the government, represented by the directory of the local development at the ministry of interior, municipalities, local media, institutions of higher education, advocacy groups, the joint workshop of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the Visions Center for Strategic and Development Studies on civic participation and local development has paved the way for future discussions on decentralization.

The participation of the governor of Irbid, **Khaled Abu Zeid**, as well as of other high-ranking experts, showed the importance of discussing concepts on local development, civic participation and decentralisation. The workshop fulfilled the function of bringing together experts from different areas who discuss highly significant issues such as decentralizing power and financial resources.

Especially the contribution of **Dr. Reiter** on equal representation of men and women provided the audience with a new perspective of gender issues and equality in political participation.

The feedback on the workshop was very positive. Many participants used the opportunity of a free exchange of opinions on problems that have not been discussed in Jordan so far, to have their say on important issues such as the role of local communities in the government's decentralization plan. Participants expressed their interest for follow-up events.