

## The Role of Municipalities in Local Development in Jordan

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**Event:** Regional Workshop

**Date/Place:** March, 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Ezz Eldin Osama Hall, Ajloun National University, Ajloun Jordan

**Concept:** Dr. Khaled Awamleh, Dr. Martin Beck  
**Organization:** KAS Amman, Visions Center For Strategic and Development Studies

### 1. Program Overview

**Thursday, March 24<sup>st</sup>, 2011**

Visions Center for Strategic And Development Studies  
Amman-Jordan

Dr. Khaled Al Awamleh

Resident Representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

Dr. Martin Beck

Governor of Ajloun

HE Mr. Faisal Al Qadi

Minister of Municipalities

HE Dr. Hazem Qashouh

### First Session: The Role of Municipalities in Local Development

The Role of Greater Ajloun Municipalities in local development

Mu' in Al Kasawneh  
Mayor, Greater Ajloun Municipalities

The Master Plan for the Greater Ajloun Municipality

Eng. Iman Zaki, Head of Master Planning Department  
Ministry of Municipal Affairs

The Role of the Private Sector in Local Development

Eng. Ms. Asma Khreisat, Amman Institute for urban development

Moderation

Prof. Dr. Ahmad Al Ayadi, President Ajloun National University

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AUSLANDSBÜRO JORDANIEN

March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011

**Second Session: Decentralization and the Management of Local Resources**

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Women's Participation in Local Politics	Dr. Renate Reiter, Hagen University Germany
Local Development Initiatives in the Jordanian Experience	Mr. Gerry Post , Director Amman Institute For Urban Development
Moderation	Dr. Ahmad Samara Al Zoubi, Deputy Governor of Ajloun

**AUSLANDSBÜRO JORDANIEN**March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011

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**2. Objectives**

In 2010, KAS Amman and the Visions Center for Strategic and Development Studies started a cooperation focussing on decentralisation and the role of municipalities in local development. In the light of recent events in Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere in the Arab world, the relevance of these issues has become even higher. Everywhere in the Arab world, people demand freedom and political rights. Decentralisation is to be considered a major instrument to fulfil these aspirations. Decentralised political structures give people a voice since it means that political entities and people on the local level are entitled to run their own affairs. The aim of this workshop was to increase the institutional capacity of municipalities by enhancing their coordination and cooperation with NGOs in managing local resources and developing general policies. KAS Amman and its partner, the Visions Center, feel deeply committed to promote the capacity building of municipalities and the value of subsidiarity.

During the workshop on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011, which took place at the Ezz Eldin Osama Hall, Ajloun National University, eight experts discussed with participants from the private, the public and the academic sector chances to improve civic participation and local development. In the framework of the decentralisation plan, launched in 2005, it was envisioned to build effective local communities in Jordan. The aim was to develop plans to promote the capacity of municipalities in Jordan and to contribute to a comprehensive development strategy. Furthermore, the workshop focused on ways to improve fighting poverty and unemployment, to create business and investment opportunities, and to improve living conditions of citizens in Jordan by focusing on institutional capacity building both in the public and the private sector.

**3. Details**

**Dr. Khaled Al Awamleh**, Director of the Visions Center for Strategic and Development Studies Amman opened the conference by thanking all experts, participants and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Amman for their support and gave a brief introductory overview on the workshop program, emphasizing that the workshop aimed at activating the role of local communities, supporting civil society organisations and enhancing sustainable development. He added that the workshop's purpose was to define and to identify concepts, principles and models of local development to promote the participative role of Jordanians in the political decision-making process.

**Dr. Martin Beck**, Resident Representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Amman, pointed out that actors on the municipal level are often better in implementing infrastructural projects than central state agencies, since they have more knowledge about the local conditions. He emphasized that empowering municipalities is a political agenda, since they touch basic democratic principles such as the rule of law. Empowering municipalities means to realize the principle of subsidiarity. The concept of subsidiarity is based on the belief that human beings can deal autonomously with affairs affecting them. He also emphasized that the role of municipalities in development is a complex issue that requires substantial financial means. The empowerment of municipalities is an ambitious program, as central state agencies tend to dominate the decision-making processes. He underlined that KAS does not present or prescribe an ideal model, but seeks to encourage dialogue between all stakeholders. He underlined that the goal of the KAS Amman is to work with local organizations and to share experiences with them. KAS does not have a perfect model for Jordan and Germany faces several

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

AUSLANDSBÜRO JORDANIEN

March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011

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challenges as well, however one may benefit from the experiences of others and exchange ideas and strategies.

**HE Mr. Faisal Al Qadi**, Governor of Ajloun, talked about the role of Ajloun within the decentralization plan launched in 2005 by King Abdullah II. He underlined that it is not easy for small municipalities to realize decentralization plans due to limited financial means of the municipalities. He stressed that capacity building is a major need in municipalities to empower rural infrastructure and to encourage the participation of citizens in local politics, thereby enhancing stability and welfare.

**HE Dr. Hazim Qashou**, Minister of Municipal Affairs, outlined in his opening remarks that municipalities face three major challenges: administrative, technical and legislative capacities. He also pointed out some good news in announcing the finishing of the Master Plan and the enhancement of the legal framework. In the end he highlighted that the government should empower municipal employees and give them a better training in administrative, legal and social topics. He concluded by saying that the "development message" is a duty to all citizens and that it should be more actively discussed in society.

#### **First Session: The Role of Municipalities in Local Development**

**Mu'in Al Kasawneh**, Mayor of Greater Ajloun Municipalities, described the concept of municipalities in local development. He outlined ways to fight unemployment and to improve the living standard in municipalities by enhancing local capacities and resources. He mentioned some case studies to show real life examples on how to improve the infrastructure such as the bus system, parks, streets and the car traffic in a municipality like Ajloun.

Eng. **Iman Zaki** talked about the decentralisation plan of the government. Its main goal is to improve the standard of living. A major challenge for Jordan is the expected doubling of the population in the next 20 years. Therefore, interrelated plans in different domains have to be implemented, such as in the field of transportation, social services etc. According to her, it is of crucial importance to enhance the protection of the environment through "intelligent agriculture". She gave several examples of how to improve irrigated agriculture as well as forestry and how to implement models of sustainability. She stressed that the Master Plan calls for the improvement of coordination between local and central authorities, as well as between the public and the private sector, to empower municipalities.

Eng. **Asma Khreisat** from the Amman Institute for Urban Development presented the regional centre for urban governments and its cooperation with the Regional Planning Department of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

Urban services and zoning systems that persisted since 1966 have to be adjusted to the current needs. Thus the city is entitled to a new system and the planning law has to be improved. Intense cooperation with Jordanian citizens is a prerequisite for this reform. Further she suggested communication with neighbouring countries to exchange experiences on urban and civil planning. Ms. Khreisat also emphasized that one important yet neglected aspect is earthquake planning. There is also a need for plans for climate change and green development. Ms. Khreisat mentioned that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs has taken steps for master planning, but is incapable to carry out all of these plans without the help from all stakeholders.

In the discussion, the participants and experts debated about the settlement

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

AUSLANDSBÜRO JORDANIEN

March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011

DR. MARTIN BECK  
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dimension which has been taken into consideration as 50% of Ajloun is populated while the rest is fallow land. The discussion also touched on how to improve the implementation of master plans and how to cope with population growth. It was stressed that a common vision is needed to achieve progress and local development.

### **Second Session: Decentralization and the Management of Local Resources**

**Dr. Renate Reiter** from the University of Hagen talked about the importance of including both men and women into decision-making processes, because of their different capabilities and needs. She presented a theoretical framework for her argument and showed some EU statistics about the (under)representation of women in local government. Dr. Reiter clarified that the introduction of a quota is a double-edged sword. She stressed that better representation of women in politics should be a major goal in every country. She also illustrated how local governments can work as "schools of democracy" as they provide direct participation and public services on the local level. Thus they are strongholds of the modern state as most public policies are implemented on the municipal level. She concluded that the key to make municipal democracy work is balanced representation of all social groups. She noted that a formal change of institutions is a mean to guarantee representation. However, institutional change is a complex process and needs a certain amount of time and there are no standard solutions for equal representation. Dr. Reiter introduced the federal system of Germany as an example of a decentralized state. Germany consists of sixteen federal states that are responsible for certain laws and decision-making processes. She underlined that the German model is one alternative out of many, and that there is no universal model for all countries. Nevertheless, many countries

face similar challenges, i.e. how to integrate the unemployed into the process of participation.

**Mr. Gerry Post**, Director of the Amman Institute for Urban Development, started by telling a little story titled "Son, I've lost the sun" to show the lack of civilian representation in decision-making processes. An old man had told him that a big building was being built next to his family's house and, as a result, there was no more sunlight in his garden. In the light of this story, Mr. Post stressed the importance of consulting locals before major construction project are pursued. He then presented a model of how to include the local population into decision-making processes. He stressed that this model could be implemented immediately and is basically applicable to all governorates and all countries. He underlined the importance of dialogue and cooperation with local citizens and described the model of the Amman Institute for Urban Development of citizen councils consisting of adults, but also of children, who were invited to public meetings to comment on urban projects. Rather than prestigious investment projects, the citizens asked for improved public services, residential space as well as modest projects related to public needs. Mr Post also pointed to a global study that concluded that citizens have three main demands: more transparency and accountability, equality and fairness, and the enhancement of government flexibility. Mr. Post stated that these are exactly the demands of the Jordanians. His approach therefore focuses more on the citizens and the people, and less on bureaucratic needs and inflexibility. This can be realized by borrowing from the best practices worldwide.

After the second session, the participants debated about the question how European women manage to combine work, family

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and household activities and what alternatives are available to the current funding system of municipalities.

#### **4. Conclusion**

As a coordinated effort, the joint workshop of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the Visions Center for Strategic and Development Studies on "The Role of Municipalities in Local Development in Jordan" has paved the way for future activities in Ajloun. It was emphasized that discussions on the topic should particularly take place on the municipal level outside Amman.

The participation of high-ranking decision-makers, representatives of the civil society and experts showed that the issue of local development, civic participation and the role of municipalities is of utmost importance for Jordan's reform agenda. The workshop achieved its goal of bringing together experts from different sectors and of various backgrounds to set-up a forum for dialogue. During the workshop experts and participants focused on how to enhance the capacities of municipalities in Jordan to promote local development. They also discussed on how to empower people to deal with affairs that affect them and to enhance the concept of subsidiarity. Thus, actors from the central level should only interfere when the local level is not capable of carrying out a certain task. The workshop enabled a vivid exchange of thoughts between the German and the Jordanian participants. Major differences and similarities were discussed. The workshop received a positive feedback. Participants discussed controversial aspects of the topic and the lively debate of the participants and

experts clearly showed that there is a major interest in attending further events on the topic and in continuing the debate on the role of municipalities in local development in Jordan.

The joint workshop of KAS Amman and the Visions Center for Strategic and Development Studies received a high coverage from national media. It was covered by several renowned daily newspapers. A report on the press coverage can be found at: <http://www.kas.de/jordanien/en/pages/6609/>