

Empowering Local Governments in Jordan: Enhancing Political and Developmental Relations between Local Governments and Local Communities

Under the Patronage of His Excellency the Minister of Municipal Affairs

Dr. Hazim Qashou'

Event: Regional Workshop

Date/ Place: July, 19th, 2011, Madaba Municipality Auditorium, Madaba, Jordan

Concept: Dr. Khaled Awamleh, Dr. Martin Beck

Organization: KAS Amman, Visions Center For Strategic and Development Studies

1. Program Overview

Tuesday, July 19th, 2011

Director Visions Center for Strategic And Development Studies	Dr. Khaled Al Awamleh
Resident Representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Amman Office	Dr. Martin Beck
Ambassador Embassy of Switzerland	HE Ms. Andrea Reichlin
Chairman Greater Municipality of Madaba	HE Mr. Eid abu Wandí
Governor of Madaba	Mr. Farouq Al Qadi
Minister of Municipal Affairs	HE Dr. Hazim Qashou'

First Session: Role and Functions of Local Governments, Civil Society Institutions and Communities in Strengthening Local Citizens

The Role of Decentralization in Local Development	Dr. Ahmad Kokazah Assistant to Amman's Governor
Citizenship and Development: Straightening the Citizen in Making	HE Ms. Andrea Reichlin Ambassador Embassy of Switzerland
The Role of Local Fund in Local Development	Mr. Mazen Odeh Naser Secretary General The Economic and Social Council
Moderation	HE Dr. Abdullh Nsoor Member of Parliament

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Second Session: Investment Opportunities and Local Development Resources

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The Impact of Touristic Investment in Local Development

HE Dr. Barakat Nimr Mheirat
Assistant to Madaba's Governor

Master Plan for the Municipality of Madaba

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

The Role of Administrative Decentralization in Enhancing the Concept of Citizenship
Moderation

Dr. Mohammad Qataqsheh
University of Mu'tah
Faculty of Political Science

Dr. Suleiman Abu Kharma
Consultant for Regional Planning
United Nations

Final Session: General Discussion

Dr. Khaled Awamleh

Dr. Jihad Abu Sondos

Dr. Martin Beck

Dr. Barakat Nimr Mheirat

Eng. Iman Zaki

HE Ambassador Andrea Reichlin

Eng. Shehada Abu Hdeib

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Objectives

In 2010, KAS Amman and the Visions Center for Strategic and Development Studies started a series of workshops 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 Centre for Strategic and Development Studies, feel deeply committed to promote the capacity building of municipalities and the value of subsidiarity.

The workshop, which took place in the Municipality of Madaba, gathered political decision makers, experts and academics to discuss the enhancement of political and developmental relations between local government and local communities. First, the discussion focussed on the role and functions of local government, civil society institutions and communities in strengthening local citizens to then look at investment opportunities and local development resources in Jordan and particularly in the Municipality of Madaba.

Opening Session

Dr. Khaled Awamleh, Director of the Visions Center for Strategic and Development Studies, welcomed the participants and stressed the importance of discussing local government and decentralization in municipalities outside Amman. He then thanked Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Amman, the Municipality of

Madaba, and the Ministry for Municipal Affairs for their cooperation and support. Then **Dr. Martin Beck**, Resident Representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Amman, thanked speakers and participants for their attendance and expressed the hope that the workshop will be another success within the cooperation of the Visions Center for Strategic and Development Studies. **HE Ms Andrea Reichlin**, the Ambassador of Switzerland expressed her delight to be attending this workshop and emphasized the value of having a discussion on decentralization in a city like Madaba. **HE Mr. Eid Abu Wandī**, the Chairman of the Greater Municipality of Madaba welcomed all participants and invited them to actively take part in the discussions. **HE Dr. Hazim Qashou'**, Minister of Municipal Affairs, expressed his delight to be in Madaba and highlighted that Madaba has a lot of potential that can be used through implementing the Master Plan as designed by the Ministry.

First Session: Role and Functions of Local Governments, Civil Society Institutions and Communities in Strengthening Local Citizens

The speakers of the first session agreed on the importance of local government and **Dr. Ahmad Kokazah** stressed that decentralization is an important pillar of King Abdullah's vision. At the moment, the municipalities' right to initiation is rather limited when it comes to policies, because first the ministry and the governorates decide on policies, before they reach the municipalities. **Mr. Mazen Odeh Naser** singled out various issues and necessities the municipalities are facing:

1. There needs to be an involvement of all parts of the community. Citizen participation and involvement should be encouraged across all social groups.
2. Members of municipalities should receive sustainable training and capacity building should be a

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priority as much in Amman as outside of the capital.

3. Extend the municipalities' prerogatives. Most municipalities face a budget deficit and handing over more responsibilities to the local level would make them more responsible. Thus, needs could be tackled at a lower cost.
4. Organise local councils elected by citizens.
5. Increase funding for local governments and municipalities to use, because at the moment they suffer from local taxes and fees.
6. Each municipality has different needs and it has to identify those needs to be able to coordinate the budget in a more efficient way.
7. Municipalities should be given the chance to market themselves. For Madaba, it would be a question of developing the tourism sector.
8. A common electronic platform for citizens and municipalities would facilitate access and communication.

For inspirational purposes, **HE Ms Andrea Reichlin**, the Ambassador of Switzerland, talked about the Swiss example of participatory democracy, even if Jordan and Switzerland may be different on many levels. The Swiss saying "The citizen's job is to keep his/her mouth open" can also be applied in the Hashemite Kingdom.

In Switzerland, there are 26 cantons, which is the equivalent of a governorate in Jordan, and 2700 municipalities, half of which incorporate less than 1000 inhabitants. This means that most municipalities have citizens' assemblies, which do not require election and the municipality council meets at least twice a year. Larger municipalities, however, require local parliaments. Madaba in the Swiss system would have a municipal

parliament with 70 members from 10 parties, elected by proportional voting system with 4 year terms and the parliament would meet every third week. An important aspect of the Swiss system is that citizens can propose agenda items to these assemblies.

In the end, the Swiss example shows that development is best when everyone is empowered.

Second Session: Investment Opportunities and Local Development Resources

In the second session, the speakers focussed on the example of Madaba with its resources and opportunities. First, the speakers discussed the importance of the tourism sector for the Jordanian Economy. The tourism sector in Jordan is flourishing, although there is still room for improvement. A recent success has been the announcement of Wadi Rum as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In economic terms, tourism provides 13.7% of the Jordanian national income. For Madaba, the main tourist attractions are the Ma'in Hot Springs and the Dead Sea. There has been an attempt to also add the Dead Sea to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, but it has not succeeded yet. Finally, it was pointed out that it is essential to ensure national security and to give a stable image of the country in order to protect tourism.

Eng. Iman Zaki also presented the Master Plan for the Municipality of Madaba. She defined the important aspects for Madaba to be the environment, education and welfare. She stressed that it is important to preserve the heritage while keeping Madaba green and clean. The plan also intends to improve the infrastructure with a tourist centre, a dedicated restaurant and hotel area as well as a commercial zone.

Empowerment of citizenship is a key aspect of decentralisation. Citizens need to be made aware of their rights and duties, to be empowered and encouraged to participate, as people often accept orders that are given

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from above without questioning them. They need, however, to understand that they are the ones that are in the best position to ameliorate their own environment.

Some participants voiced the opinion that agriculture is even more important than tourism for Madaba. The sector thus needs more opportunities, appropriate funding and, above all, protection.

Conclusion

The event jointly organized by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Amman and the Visions Center for Strategic and Development Studies has been one of the first town hall

meetings in Madaba, bringing together the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, governmental and municipal representatives, as well as the local civil society. The workshop has paved the way for future activities in Madaba. It was emphasized that discussions on the topic should particularly take place on the municipal level outside Amman. The high number and diversity of participants and speakers led to fruitful and intense discussions. Attendees were inspired to initiate similar activities in the future and clearly showed 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.