

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

AUSLANDSBÜRO JORDANIEN

March, April 2014

Imke Haase

Dr. Otmar Oehring

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“The Role of Municipal Councils in Local Development in Jordan”

Event: Round Table Discussion

Date, Place: March, April 2014; Irbid, Mafraq, Zarqa-Jordan

Organization: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Jordan Office (KAS),
Mossawah Center for Civil Society Development

Program

Welcome Speeches

Project Manager
Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung
Jordan Office
Amman - Jordan

Ms. Nidaa Al Shraideh

Director of
Mossawah Center for Civil Society
Development
Mafraq – Jordan

Mr. Suliman Al Kawaldeh

Discussion

Closing Session

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Introduction

Research in recent years has shown that municipal councils in Jordan play only a marginal role in the development of communities which is mainly the result of a missing basis of communication between the councils and the communities. As the municipal councils are increasingly dealing with complex social, economic and political matters, this lack of communication needs to be addressed. The participation of the communities has to be strengthened in order to achieve development and sustainability. In this context, KAS Jordan Office and MOSSAWAH Center for Civil Society Development conducted three round table discussions, entitled "The Role of Municipal Councils in Local Development in Jordan". The three dialogue sessions, each lasted for two days, were held in the provinces of Irbid, Al-Mafraq and Al-Zarqa.

Welcome Speeches

Ms. Nidaa Al Shraideh, Project Manager at KAS Jordan Office stressed the relevance of the topic and highlighted the importance of the successful cooperation with MOSSAWAH Center. She further underlined the need to develop the role of municipalities to achieve progress and inclusiveness on the level of local communities. Therefore, Ms. Nidaa Al Shraideh thanked MOSSAWAH Center for its efforts and advancing the topic.

Mr. Suliman Al Kawaldeh, Director of MOSSAWAH Center for Civil Society Development, emphasized the importance of promoting the participation of the whole community and the networking of the different sectors of society which will be reflected positively in the local communities. The MOSSAWAH Center aims at supporting local development in the Jordanian society through various activities strengthening civic efforts as well as institutional frameworks.

1. The developmental role of municipal councils: reality and ambition

In the first session it was emphasized that the municipal work has to move to a developmental phase, including a developmental municipal program, a step which requires tools to be invested ahead to this project. This includes a municipality law which is based on decentralization, the creation of incentives to invest in qualitative partnerships between the private sector and the municipality, and the inclusion of professional unions, sports clubs, and the youth in the decision-making processes. The participants called for the need to form a coalition between a range of targeted municipalities to work as partners in order to focus on developmental projects, as well as to activate the developmental units within the municipalities through capacity building and leaving opportunities to share and exchange experiences and skills.

2. Participatory relationship between municipal councils, the private sector, and international donor institutions

In order to enhance the role of municipal councils in implementing development projects in local communities, the partnership between the municipal councils, the private sector and international donor institutions needs to be strengthened. This cooperation would imply development and promotes the principle of social responsibility of the private sector. Therefore, a profound local development strategy, involving a wide range of municipal institutions, international donors and the private sector, has to be processed to analyze strengths and weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. In this context, the importance of a clear vision and strategic development plan besides the identification of the needs of the private sector and international donors to assure their contribution to the implementation were highlighted. Municipal councils should have a key role in this cooperation by providing the appropriate environment to stimulate investment and to attract local

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and foreign investments, especially with regard to the simplification of procedures and the provision of an appropriate infrastructure.

3. Partnership between municipal councils and educational institutions and their impact on development

Subsequently, the importance of a participatory relationship between municipal councils and educational institutions, like schools and universities that contributes to a higher standard of services provided to the community was underlined. Such cooperation between municipal councils and educational institutions can benefit from training courses and continuing education offered by universities. Also, municipal councils facing different forms of challenges could profit by research and scientific studies. Another aspect of a participatory relationship between municipal councils and educational institutions includes the exchange of expertise and special consulting for developing the municipality works. Further, the concept of voluntary work of students to serve local communities should be expanded.

4. Developmental integration between municipal councils and civil society organizations

In this session the need to strengthen the complementary relationship between municipal councils and civil society institutions was highlighted, aiming an integrative developmental system which contributes to the creation of a suitable environment of joint work. Thus, the quality of services provided to local communities can be improved. In this context the civil society needs to fulfil its task in promoting awareness of the importance of municipal work, community participation and dissemination of the culture of participation in the decision-making process. In addition, they need to provide studies and polls of the challenges facing municipal councils which will contribute to the development of the municipal councils.

5. Relationship between municipal councils and the media: the desired developmental role

The importance of building partnerships between local councils and the media as an effective tool to raise awareness and education of issues related to the municipality was stressed. Thus, development can be realized through the evaluation and monitoring of the activities of the municipal councils and linked to the needs of the local community. Participants expressed the importance of activating the role of the media spokesman in each municipality and taking advantage of the media reports as feedback for municipal councils to highlight the developments of the municipal council's work.

6. The role of municipal councils in the promotion of community participation

In the last session the importance of promoting community participation in the decision-making process of municipal councils was highlighted. Priorities and needs of the different municipal areas have to be identified, and action plans should be provided to solve the problems faced by the targeted areas. Thus, the partnership between the municipal councils and the local community is reinforced. The enhancement of community participation can be achieved through the formation of neighborhood committees, the establishment of volunteer consultant's councils, the allocation of adequate budget to be spent on programs to strengthen community participation, the community involvement in policy-making and operational plans for the municipal council's works and the integration of community volunteer work to contribute in raising the level of services provided to applicants.

Conclusion

All in all, the following recommendations can be retained:

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- Continue to hold such dialogue sessions in order to cover more municipal councils.
- Conduct a survey to determine the reality of the municipal council's works.
- Update legislation on municipal councils, activate and strengthen the application of decentralization.
- The launch of "observatory municipal councils" as an observer, evaluator, and developer for all the activities of the municipal councils.
- Formation of economic and social councils in each province to strengthen the developmental role of municipal councils.
- Building a database belonging to the municipalities to be the entrance to the development of policies, strategies and operational plans.
- Promote participatory volunteerism among the youth sector through voluntary activities.
- Work to strengthen the participative relationship between municipal councils and civil society organizations, educational institutions and the private sector.
- Regulate the relationship between municipal councils and the media to promote the real role of the media and the developmental works achieved, as well as activating the role of media spokesman in each municipality.