



Connective Cities Virtual Dialogue Event on

Local Economic Development and Job Creation in MENA

Beyond the Immediate Response to the Economic Impacts of the Pandemic

Date: 29th September-7th October 2020

The international cities platform, Connective Cities and its initiators, the Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, the German Association of Cities (Deutscher Städtetag) and Engagement Global GmbH with its Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW), invite urban practitioners from the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) and Germany to take part in the Connective Cities virtual dialogue event “*Local Economic Development and Job Creation*”.

Background: Local Economic Development and Job Creation in MENA

Local economic development (LED) is key to achieving sustainable development goals¹ as well as a pathway to eradicate poverty and increase shared prosperity. Cities in MENA have registered relatively dynamic economic growth and investment rates during the first decade of the century, however, political instability and security threats have considerably slowed economic prospects. Among the identified challenges that impacted local economic performance are the lack of financial resources and capital, the lack of good infrastructure, and low economic participation of youth and women. Overcoming the economic impacts inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic is an added challenge to municipalities. Against this background, mobilising funds for economic recovery and planning for green economic transformation are rendered a priority across the region.² Furthermore, improving municipal capacity for strategic planning, mobilizing the private sector, skills development and education were also identified as priorities for LED in the region.³

Implementing LED plans is long, complex and context-sensitive and achieving it necessitates that municipalities create an environment conducive to business creation and economic growth in their communities. Planning for LED should be based on thorough analysis of the socio-economic status, human and financial resources, and the local competitive advantage. Some cities in MENA have managed to ground strategies in local economic realities and to build growth coalitions between public and private stakeholders while finding ingenious ways to leverage the capabilities of their coalition partners when they lacked the capacity or financial resources. It is thus necessary to find an evidence-based approach for economic development strategies that capitalize on prospects and are contextualized to the local needs and resources.

¹ LED contributes to the reduction of poverty and inequality (SGD 1 and 10), inclusive growth, employment and decent work (SDG 8), as well as to building sustainable and resilient cities (SDG 11).

² World Bank’s blog ‘Going Green after COVID-19 will help MENA economies recover better’. Accessible [here](#).

³ Center for Mediterranean Integration survey entitled “*Local Economic Development among the Host Municipalities Network*”.

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Thematic focus of the virtual dialogue event

From a thematic standpoint, the Connective Cities virtual dialogue event on **local economic development (LED) and job creation** will focus on the following subtopics:

- 1. Strategic planning for LED:** guiding a participatory LED process that encourages partnership arrangements and inclusive representation; mobilizing strategic partnerships with the private sector and investors to access alternative financing mechanisms; enabling the joint design and implementation of a common development strategy; using local resources and competitive advantages to create a resilient locality.
- 2. Promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities and social enterprise:** implementing livelihood programs to enhance entrepreneurship skills and support the establishment of microbusinesses; contributing to social cohesiveness and conflict prevention through decent job creation for local communities.
- 3. Public investments in green infrastructure and circular economies:** creating decent jobs and revenues for localities through the investment in green infrastructure and circular economy; transformation towards green economy.

Objectives and Methodology

This virtual dialogue event is the first component of the Connective Cities **learning process on LED and job creation** and it aims at promoting the exchange of expertise on good practices for planning and implementing LED and job creation programs in cities in MENA. It thus facilitates practice-oriented exchange and peer-to-peer consultations among municipal actors on effective solutions to address challenges related to LED and job creation in their local realities. Through its virtual format, the dialogue event enables sharing of a broad variety of information synchronously as well as asynchronously, while ensuring the ease of communication between the participants. Interaction will take place using a variety of tools and the discussions will be recorded for future reference.

The objectives of the dialogue event include:

- Facilitating exchange of know-how and experience on **good practices** through peer-to-peer consultation among urban practitioners from MENA and Germany;
- Developing the capacity of participants to analyse and overcome challenges of implementing LED and job creation programs;
- Determining future support needed for projects, which includes support from the Connective Cities International Community of Practice for Sustainable Urban Development.

The work process involves the following steps:

1. Content preparation and **production of the virtual event materials** (e.g. podcasts, videos, interviews). This digital content will be available to participants on the online platform. Participants will receive a technical walkthrough and instructions on using the online tools.
2. Thematically focused input on good practice of LED including **keynote speeches and showcasing of successful locally implemented projects**;
3. **Peer-to-peer consultations** among participants to identify and discuss existing challenges and lessons learned from implementing LED and job creation programs.
4. **Action planning**: in moderated break-out group sessions, participants will use visual tools to discuss implementing appropriate practice-oriented solutions in their projects that would leverage local resources and are adapted to the local needs.
5. Selected projects that are developed as part of this event will have the chance to be further supported by Connective Cities through follow-up activities including local project workshops, expert missions, study tours and financial advisory services.

Participation and Contact

Prospective participants are expected to provide **a good practice example from a project** they implemented or are currently implementing fitting the thematic focus of the event. We particularly encourage showcasing of good practices **that incorporate gender- and/or climate-sensitive solutions**.

To apply for a participant spot, please send us an email with your function and organisation as well as a short description of the project you would like to showcase. We encourage participation of **two experts** from the LED or relevant municipal departments with a possibility of being accompanied by a partner from the civil society, private sector or academia. The deadline for application is **11st September 2020**.

Please be aware that you do not need an app or other installations to participate in the virtual event, nevertheless, it is necessary to have

- A reliable internet connection
- A desktop/pc with the latest version of Chrome or FireFox
- A head-set

For applications and queries from interested experts from the MENA region, please contact: **Dr. Muna Shalan**, GIZ Regional Network Coordinator Connective Cities – MENA region (muna.shalan@giz.de).

Interested German experts should contact **Ms. Alice Balbo**, Connective Cities Project Manager at the German Association of Cities (alice.balbo@staedtetag.de).

Factsheet: The virtual dialogue event at a glance

Type of Event	Virtual dialogue event
Date	<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Technical orientation: 29th September 2020ii. Keynote speeches and good practices: 30th September 2020iii. Peer-to-peer advisory: 1st October 2020iv. Action planning: 5th & 7th October 2020
Duration	A one-week-long event that includes five online sessions. Individual offline tasks up to 4-5h, total 16h. The final agenda of the event will be communicated with the selected participants in due course.
Thematic Focus	LED and job creation <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Strategic planning for LED- Promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities and social enterprise- Public investments in green infrastructure and circular economies
Participants	A total of approximately 27 participants, including 24 representatives from 12 municipalities in MENA and 2-3 German experts.
Criteria for Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Practical perspective and first-hand experience on LED and job creation projects;- Willingness to virtually present a good local practice example;- Digital literacy and readiness to engage in a virtual exchange during the event
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Interactive webinars- Virtual interactive group discussions (break-out group sessions and collaborative tools), with a focus on peer-to-peer consultation;- Action planning to optimize project plans.
Language	The event is to be held in English. English-Arabic simultaneous interpretation will be provided.
Contact	Dr. Muna Shalan (muna.shalan@giz.de) for international participants Ms. Alice Balbo (alice.balbo@staedtetag.de) for German participants