

On behalf of



Bundesministerium für
wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit
und Entwicklung

Published by



Connective Cities Local Projects Workshop

MENA- Virtual Event

19th to 25th of January 2021

Partners of Connective Cities



Commissioned by



Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development

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Disclaimer

This is a Connective Cities publication. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Connective Cities partners (German Association of Cities, Engagement Global gGmbH / Service Agency Communities in One World and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH).

Executive Summary

Six municipalities from the MENA region have participated in the Local Projects Workshop, which was a 2-days virtual workshop held on the 19th-20th January 2021. The workshop consisted of a series of virtual discussions among the participating municipal representatives and technical and financial experts. The workshop was followed by two virtual sessions on proposal writing for funding and financing of municipal projects held on the 21st and 25th of January 2021 respectively.

The municipalities of Sfax (Tunisia), Hay Al-Andalus (Libya), As Samou (Palestine), Qalqilya (Palestine), Bethlehem (Palestine), and Greater Abasan (Gaza-Palestine) thrived to construct their project designs such that their communities are served by addressing barriers to economic growth.

Throughout the workshop, the municipalities were guided by technical and financial advisors who supported the municipalities in finetuning the key components of their LED projects. The advisors' feedback was critical for the municipalities and was integrated to

the final projects proposals that were presented to representatives of financing institutions on the 25th January 2021. It was evident that the project ideas *-initially developed during the LED Virtual Dialogue in 2020-* required further development to present clear and measurable outputs with specific timeline projections. It was also necessary to clarify the anticipated impact of these LED projects on the lives of the local citizens.

Another important milestone of the workshop was to introduce the participants to proposal writing for development project funding with the goal of assisting the municipalities in fundraising for their LED projects. Although proposal writing isn't an entirely new topic to the participants, it was crucial for them to understand the critical elements of proposals that are often overlooked (*such as the logical framework or the risk mitigation plan*).

By the 4th day of the workshop, six project proposals were drafted taking into consideration the feedback from the experts



in days 1, 2, and 3. Despite the need to regularly update these proposals to account for the different donors' requirements and the changes in any of the variables on the ground, these proposals will remain a key asset for the

Background

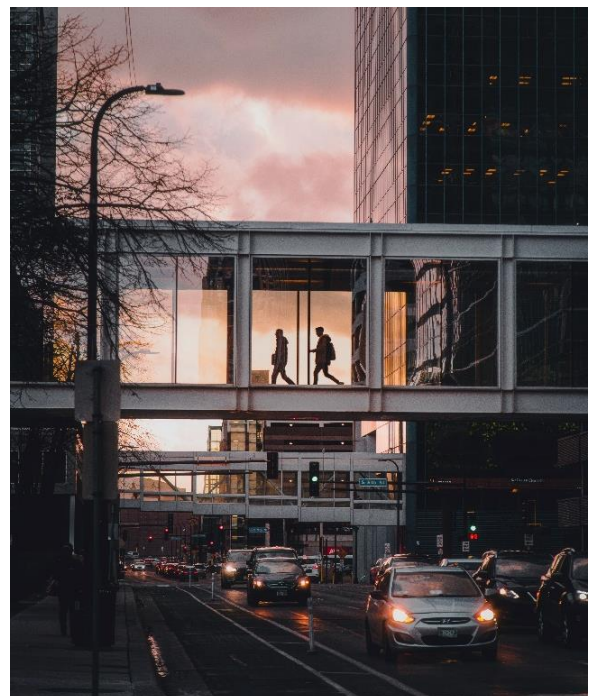
Local Economic Development (LED) remains a top priority for the MENA countries as a driver for economic stability and job creation for a region with one of the highest unemployment rates in the world. While many resources are invested in fostering local economic development in the MENA countries led by governments, there is often a lack of systematic access to practice-oriented solutions. To this end, Connective Cities has a mission to promote the exchange of municipal expertise and act as a facilitator between the supply of regional expertise and the demand for municipal development.

In October 2020, More than 40 local urban practitioners from 22 municipalities and 10 countries from Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Germany, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia took part in the LED Virtual Dialogue Event organized by the Connective Cities project. The dialogue event consisted of five virtual sessions focusing on facilitating the exchange of know-how and experiences through peer-to-peer learning among municipal representatives and urban practitioners. The primary areas of focus included: Strategic Planning for LED, Sustainable Livelihood Opportunities and Social Enterprise, and Public Investment in Green Infrastructure and Circular Economy. The dialogue event aimed at enriching the analysis and planning capacity of the participating municipal representatives to address existing challenges facing LED and job creation programs.

municipalities and a precious reference for establishing new partnerships or drafting long-term municipal strategies. *Annex II has the summaries of all project proposals submitted.*

The peer-to-peer exchange also led to identifying the gaps in resources and the support needed to implement future LED projects. Through peer-to-peer learning, municipalities discussed and exchanged knowledge on the best practices for LED project implementation and the strategies to address the challenges in their respective countries.

Later in 2020, eight municipalities have developed LED project ideas. However, the municipalities were only able to come up with basic drafts that would require further expansion into fully-fledged project proposals with which they can attract funding to implement their envisioned



projects and serve their communities. This has heightened the need for technical and financial advisory on different LED topics from experts in the field.

To establish a proper intervention plan to further support the municipalities, the observations made during the dialogue event were translated into needs that can be summarized in the following areas:

- Understanding the impact of different LED interventions on sustainable livelihoods of citizens

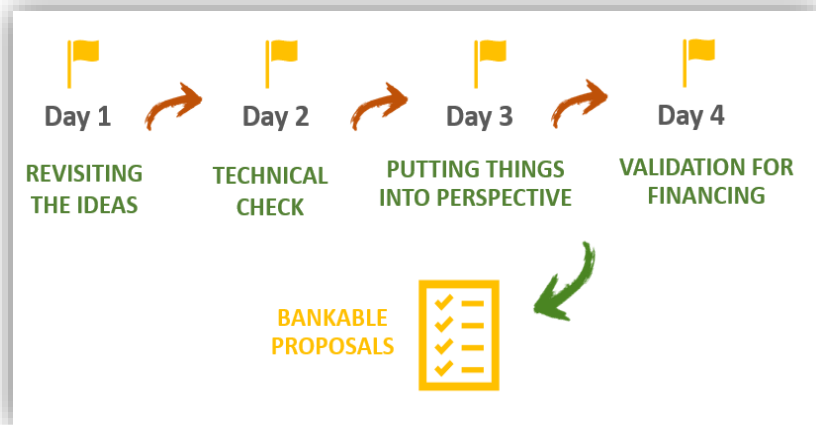
- The interlinkages between LED projects and other areas like education, health, gender, environment, etc.
- Adapting the LED projects to national and global objectives and priorities
- Adapting the LED projects to available resources and existing expertise
- Establishing Strategic and impactful partnerships for the projects
- Risk forecasting and mitigation measures planning
- Best approaches to fund projects with different financing mechanisms and tools.

Local Projects Workshop Approach

The Local Projects Workshop was designed such that the activities are following a normal growth curve of what has been established during the LED Virtual Dialogue taking place in 2020. The harmony established among participants and the understanding of the rationale of the Connective Cities methodology was expanded on to foster peer-to-peer learning with more attention given this time to individual municipalities needs and visions. The Local Projects Workshop approach leveraged the progress made to date by the 6 participating municipalities while addressing further actions including:

Improved Understanding of the LED Concepts

Local Economic Development concepts were better oriented throughout the workshop by allowing the participants to adjust and present their project ideas on the first day to an audience of LED experts as well as peer municipalities who provided quick feedback to the proposed ideas. This allowed for a secondary quality check for the ideas before expanding into fully-fledged proposals.



Technical Advisory

After identifying the LED priorities and needs for each municipality as reflected in their presentations, it was necessary for the municipalities to receive technical advisory/guidance on specific planned interventions to ensure that they are realistic, feasible, and do not create conflict with other sectors or ecosystem actors. Four technical advisory experts joined the municipalities in breakout sessions to discuss the justifications for their project ideas and the specific interventions planned.

The following experts joined the 2nd day of the workshop (Technical Advisory day):

- **Petra Thieme** – in support of Qalqilya and Hay Al-Andalus
- **Alfonso Garcia** – in support of Sfax and Greater Abasan
- **Norbert Evermann** – in support of Bethlehem
- **Hanane Haber** – in support of As Samou'

The experts joined the municipalities in one-to-one sessions where the experts deliberated the project concepts and provided advisory where needed to the participating municipalities. Some of

guiding questions used for the technical advisory included:

1. What was the motivation for the project idea?
2. Why does this project represent a priority for the city at this time?
3. Have there been any similar projects implemented/tested before by the municipality?
4. Have there been any similar projects implemented/tested before by others?
5. How would the project's successful implementation support the local economy?
6. How would the project's successful implementation support job creation and livelihoods?
7. How replicable is the project? Can the project be better implemented by others?
8. How can we establish strategic partnerships for this project?
9. What are the most significant risks to the implementation of the project?
10. Can this project be self-funded?
11. If external funding is needed, what resources can the municipality invest or leverage?
12. Is there a proper outlook on project handover and sustainability?

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Technical advisory sessions revealed that the municipalities are in need for detailed analysis of their projects to address the motivation, the viability of interventions, and the methods to properly engage the target groups. Additionally, multi-stakeholder market studies must be conducted to address the existing socio-economic conditions of citizens and how to design interventions that will improve income generation, employability, and business start-ups (as in the case of Qalqilya and Hay Al Andalus).

Furthermore, the technical design of certain projects that requires procurement of machinery or adaptation of new technology (as in the case of Bethlehem and Greater Abasan) must be validated with experts and private sector partners to ensure that the introduced technologies are cost-effective, environmentally sustainable, and can be managed by local operators/technicians.

Financial Advisory

Estimating the required financial resources along with the ability to identify financing/investment partners remains a bottleneck for municipalities. Therefore, this topic was given great attention in the Local Projects Workshop. Prior to the workshop, financial advisors in the field of financing development projects were identified and invited to join the workshop to provide guidance on the resource needs for each municipality according to their developed ideas; provide input on the private sector investment potential for these projects on the local level; and provide input on other means of financing the LED projects such as grants, loans, etc. The financial advisors represented a wide spectrum of financing



entities and included experts from the following organizations:

- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – Regional Bureau of Arab States
- UN-Habitat – MENA Regional Office
- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) – Palestine Office
- Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)

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The inputs and feedback the experts provided to the municipalities were very critical in understanding the donor/financing institution perspective and what they are looking for in project proposals. The municipalities had the chance to ask specific financing questions related to their projects and whether the present entities would like to have further discussions to consider supporting their projects.



Proposal Writing Support

The ability to conceptualize LED projects have been established during the LED Dialogue event (October 2020) via peer-to-peer advisory. However, building a framework for project design required a more elaborate learning activity to introduce the municipalities to the art of drafting solid proposals and to enable them to attract grant funding or other financing options (development and commercial loans, investments, Public Private Partnership, etc.).

The workshop included a dedicated day for building the capacity of the municipalities on proposal writing as a means for fundraising for their LED projects. The need for proposal writing support was clear as the existing capacities were limited due to the fact that traditional municipal projects execution relies primarily on government funding rather than other financing alternatives.



During the 3rd day of the workshop, Dr. Ramzi Hage, a capacity development expert and proposal writing specialist, introduced the 6 participating municipalities to the principal components of the proposal structure with most of the attention given to understanding the donor's/financier's development priorities and target groups prior to drafting the proposal. Similarly, the proposal writing session focused on the need for understanding the diversity of funding programs and entities.

To apply more practicality to the session, the participants engaged in a hands-on activity of drafting their own proposals using a template customized for this workshop. Despite the need for additional refinement, the resulting proposal drafts served as a great tool to describe the story of the LED projects in a format acceptable by donors/financiers.

This way, the municipalities will have a reference for their LED project designs in a digestible format readily available for any potential financing opportunities. The Connective Cities project will further work on promoting these proposals among its network of financing institutions for potential collaboration and funding.

Recommendation for further Development

The Local Projects Workshop served as an excellent milestone for the participating municipalities to develop their project ideas and clearly identify the underlining challenges that could hinder their projects implementation. Nevertheless, the projects remain in need for further improvement and validation from local or regional partners as well as experts in the field of LED. The Connective Cities project and through direct and indirect communication tools (such as the online portal) are set to continue the support for the municipalities fulfilling any

additional needs that arise as they continue to improve their project designs and seek financing opportunities. Based on the outcome and the milestones reached during this workshop, additional backstopping can be managed in any of the following areas:

1. **Online Engagement:** Activating more engagement of municipalities on the Connective Cities web portal where further assistance can be facilitated through enriching the portal with resources and contacts of partner organizations from which they could gain more input for their projects.
2. **Facilitating Knowledge Exchange:** Liaising between the municipalities after the workshop to extend the peer-to-peer knowledge exchange in the form of exchange events or joint specific topic training sessions.
3. **Additional Capacity Building:** Plan and conduct special training days on topics that appeared to have lack of capacity in as observed from the workshop such as: market studies, beneficiaries needs assessment, building local partnerships and alliances, financing options, etc.
4. **Expert Missions:** Expert missions from EU municipalities with longer experience in LED project design and execution to assist the municipalities with guidance sourced from their best practices in the sector.

Annexes:

Annex I: Local Projects Workshop Agenda

Day-Time	Topic	Description	Sessions Breakdown	Who?
Jan 19 11:00 – 13:00 CET	Workshop Opening	Introduction to the workshop and presentations of the project ideas from the LED Dialogue to receive experts' feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening & Welcoming notes • Introduction to the local projects workshop (roadmap) • Presentation of project ideas and feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CMI/Connective Cities • Input from Moderators • Municipalities and Q&A with Technical Experts
Jan 20 11:00 – 14:00 CET	Technical Peer Advisory	One-on-One project design advisory sessions with each municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the advisory methodology • Individual advisory sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Technical Experts • 3 Facilitators
Jan 21 11:00 – 14:15 CET	Proposal Writing for Funding	Technical training on proposal writing for grants funding (multiple donor approach)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to proposal writing for LED • Key definitions of proposals • Proposal templates and special considerations • Budgeting and Co-financing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Proposal Writing Expert • 3 facilitators
Jan 25 11:00 – 14:00 CET	Financial Advisory	Project presentations and advisory from LED financing experts (donor and development financing agencies) specific to the proposed projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General input on how to attract financing for their LED projects • 5 min presentation of project proposals by each municipality • Open financial advisory session by experts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financing advisors from funding agencies • Proposal Writing Expert

Annex II: Project Proposals Summaries

Municipal ity	Sfax	As Samou	Qalqilya	Hay Al Andalus	Bethlehem	Greater Abasan
LED Sub- sector	Strategic Planning for LED	Strategic Planning for LED	Sustainable Livelihood Opportunities	Sustainable Livelihood Opportunities	Job Creation in the Circular Economy	Job Creation in the Circular Economy
Project Title	Business Craft Center	Rehabilitation of As Samou’ Historical Centre	Creative Palestinian Women	Center for training and development of women and people with disabilities	Eco-Center Bethlehem: Toward a Virtuous Model of Environmental Sustainability	Improving the Environmental and Economic Sustainability of Olive Oil Industry in Palestine
Problem to be Addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High unemployment rates due to COVID-19 Pandemic • Lack of economic opportunities for widowed women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty Reduction • Engagement of Marginalized groups within the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The closure of 600 of the establishments due to the wall besieging the entire city of Qalqilya • The emigration of capital abroad and the rise of unemployment • The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of opportunities available for women and people with disabilities within Hay Al Andalus • Lack of access to the market for handicrafts businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed waste collection is reducing landfill lifetime • Collection of mixed waste causes a higher content of organic waste is that produces high amount of leachate and bad odors • Accumulation of waste does not help in attracting tourists to the city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of innovation and marketing strategies of olive oil products • Lack of support industries to benefit from olive waste material • Absence of comprehensive investment environment • Lack of expertise in the green sector
Anticipated Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of new job opportunities in the craft sector. • Economic and Financial inclusion of a marginalized segment of society • Income generation for 30 women with their products. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserved, restored, improved accessibility and enhanced sustainability of cultural and archeological heritage of As Samou’ city centre • Knowledge and practical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowered families who with home-based food production businesses. • Capacity is developed for 100 families to produce household food. • Promoted role of small businesses for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding and diversifying work opportunities for Hay Al-Andalus craftsman; and improving their competencies • Building the technical capacity of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved capabilities of local institutions and of the Joint Service Council with solid waste management and environmental protection Increased awareness of the local 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive green economy investment environment is enabled for an equipped 2000m² area in Abasan • Improved olive oil press industry and operations in Abasan

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		technical skills of architects, young professionals on cultural heritage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating temporary and permanent job opportunities for women, youth and people with disabilities 	the contribution to economic growth. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed sustainable positive livelihood strategies • Improved women's self-confidence and abilities to contribute to the local economy. 	professionals and trainees of marketing strategies of the manufactured handcraft products	communities about environmental issues and creating new jobs in the community through the establishment of new start-ups in the field of Urban Circular Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honoring the Green Charter in Abasan and protecting the environment by providing a cheap source of alternative energy
Timeline	18 Months	24 Months	10 Months	36 Months	18-24 Months	24 Months
Required Budget	\$400.000	\$300.000	\$135.000	\$120.000	\$135.000	\$450.000
Co-financing by Municipality	\$100.000	\$40.000	\$20.000	-	\$300.000	\$135.000

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Published by

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Connective Cities

April 2021

Commissioned by

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

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