

**Support for the Improvement of Local Governance in Lebanon
(Giving the local collectivities the opportunities to better respond to the
Citizens' expectations)**

**A presentation given by Hend El Khatib Oueidat
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Dear Colleagues,

The objective of my speech is to present, briefly, and in a clear way, I hope, the project that we have started with, beginning 2007, which is “Support for the Improvement of Local Governance”. This project is financed by the EU and executed by OMSAR (Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform) In Lebanon. This project is the second phase of the project implemented between 2004 and beginning 2006 which is “the preparation of Municipal Action Projects within the scope of a planned local development.”

I- The context within which the EU has launched several initiatives towards the local collectivities in Lebanon can be explained by the fact that formally the Municipalities in Lebanon have very wide competences and responsibilities, which are rarely exercised due to the extreme weaknesses of their financial and human resources.

The locally elected people and the municipal staff (when they are present) are not familiar with the classical methods of Municipal Management (such as Planning, participative approach, communication etc...); the common work between municipalities is relatively not very much developed.

On the basis of this came the project “The Preparation of Municipal Action Projects within the Scope of a Planned Local Development” (first phase) followed now by the “Support to Local Governance”.

The first phase has led, to a certain extent, to develop the inter-municipal work, to establish a dialogue structure between civil society and the elected people and to give the beneficiary municipalities the adequate tools for intervention (through strategies, plans, project document). However, with very fragile results, it is convenient now to begin the second phase which concentrates on:

- (i) Extending the support given to the 12 municipal clusters through putting into practice, after discussion with the civil society, the strategies developed on the first phase and following up the projects which are related.
- (ii) Spreading into the overall Lebanese local collectivities (there are in total more than 900 municipalities and several hundreds of villages which do not have municipalities) the participative planning methods, that were developed in the 200 municipalities and villages (that do not have municipalities) which constitute the 12 municipal clusters stated previously; this can be done through conducting training sessions for the elected members, the municipal personnel and the actors of the civil society and through developing the decentralized cooperation with the European local collectivities.

II- The Specific Objective of the second phase of the Project is to increase the impact of the actions of local collectivities in a balanced development in the region, and this to be done through:

(i) Developing inter-municipal relations: This initiative started in the previous project and took place through the CDE (Comites des elus) elected committee that were created.

The CDE was composed of all the municipal presidents that constitute the cluster, in addition, to the mokhtars for the villages that do not have municipalities.

The CdE is the first and the last reference that should elaborate the local development plan and should put it on the first track to be later on adopted and implemented.

The CdE's role is to – decide on the adoption of a certain objective,- stimulate the participation process, reinforce its tools and mechanism and diffuse it to the society and the local partners of the cluster, -decides on all the activities of the project within a the cluster, and follows and supervises its implementation. It can be considered as the reference to solve the problems and the difficulties that might hinder the progression of the project. It is also the authority that should control the differences and transform them into an agreement to reflect the common interest at the level of local development. It assumed, and should continue to assume the role of the principle negotiator with the project support partners (donor agencies), and it should follow up the implementation if a certain donor agency decides to finance a certain project.

The Office of the CdE is composed of a president, vice president and a reporter elected by the members of the CdE. The office of the CdE is responsible of preparing the meetings of the committee as well as those of the Consultative Platform (CP) under the direction of the president of the bureau, as well as of organizing and managing the specialized workshops.

All this is supposed to be done through

- (ii) Using planning techniques and
- (iii) Applying local development strategies and most importantly is
- (iv) Associating the civil society in the municipal management process.

The characteristics of this project as well as the previous phase of the project is its focus on the stakeholders by letting them involved in the planning process and to sensitizing them to their responsibilities towards what is called Local Planning i.e their participation in the local governance process.

Participation will be the key to implement and to re-adjust whatever was planned and decided in the previous phase. For this purpose Consultative platforms were created and shall be activated beginning this second phase.. This CP is composed of representatives of all the villages' institutions as well as the different sectors included in the municipal cluster.

To have a successful project means that participative local development will be a question that concerns not only the municipal council or councils of the cluster, but also the local societies and all similar categories. Thus, it was a necessity to establish a CP that was and will continue to be an interactive cadre between the elected committee and the local partners at the individual as well as at the groups' level.

In addition, the CP had and will continue to reinforce the participation process between the local actors and the members of municipal councils. It aimed to motivate the participation of the local citizens in elaborating the vision that will reinforce local development and to take decisions related to development.

The members of the CP should be real representatives of a category or organization working in the socio-economic sectors as well as in education, health sectors.... Those members should be ready to consecrate the needed timing and efforts to the participation process; and they should belong to different domain of specialization. The CP that were established in the first phase were, as an example, composed of: Mokhtars, sporting clubs, organizations grouping women and youth, education and teaching, agriculture sector, industrial sector, tourism, trade and services, institutions of civil societies, environment, medias...

The private and public sectors should be represented with the exception of presidents and members of municipal councils, municipal staff, and the entrepreneurs of municipal projects.

The composition process of the CP followed the following steps:

- the municipal presidents, everyone at the level of his village and in collaboration with the local development agents (ADLs), should identify all the actors and active parties in the cluster and should prepare a preliminary list that includes the name of the persons that could be included in the CP.
- The elected committee will choose, as a first choice, the members of the CP based on the criteria that were mentioned above.
- Each Local Development Agent (ADLs) will follow up the composition of the CP, will study the representativeness of the sectors and the concerned categories and will give his opinion to the CDE.
- The representatives of the villages and municipalities in each cluster, in a plenary session, will adopt the final composition of the CP.

The elected committee (CdE) is responsible for coordinating the function of the CP in consultation with the (ADL). The president of the office of the CdE will direct the meetings and the ADL will play the role of the reporter. The members of the CP and the CdE are voluntary.

III-The support to Local Governance Project consists mainly of:

- (i) Assisting the 12 municipal clusters in sustaining the inter-municipal consultation structures (through Comites des elus that were created in the first phase)
- (ii) Supporting the installation of Local Development Offices responsible for promoting the development strategies and following up the projects identified in the framework of territorial planning.
- (iii) Conducting training activities for the elected members as well as for the municipal personnel of the 12 clusters; the training, in this case, shall focus on the use of participative planning techniques as well as the Management tools for local development (workshops, manuals etc..)
- (iv) Exposing the 12 municipal clusters to the experience of European local collectivities when it comes to managing the development and the participation of civil society in local governance; Contributing in the development of decentralized cooperation, identifying partners and following up the implementation and organization of study tours for the elected municipal staff. This action can be extended to include other municipalities.
- (v) Assisting the 12 clusters in sustaining and reinforcing the structures and methods of participative work, and especially those that were initiated in the previous project (Consultative Platform- Surveys- information campaigns).
- (vi) Training the actors of civil societies of the 12 clusters to assume their role in governance and local development (workshops, manuals, training etc..)

The project also includes activities that are destined to municipalities other than the 12 clusters; these activities concentrate mainly on generalizing the concepts of participative local development through delivering training on the “Techniques of Participative Planning” (used in the 12 clusters) and on the use of “processes and Beneficiation Techniques of the Environmental Inheritance.” And at the same time training civil societies in their role in municipal governance and on their efficient implications in activities related to local development.

In addition, there are activities addressed to sensitization (sensibilisation) of the youth.

Generalization activities are to take place in the form of workshops, training actions, internet site, and manuals.

In Conclusion, It is **expected** that, at the end of the project:

At the level of Municipalities, the 12 municipal clusters shall be able to put into practice their development strategies, and at the same time a quit good number of Lebanese municipalities- other than the 12 clusters- shall be able to use the methods and tools of participative planning for local development.

In addition, at the HR level: the elected members and the municipal personnel shall be able to use the methods and tools that will help them in following up efficiently the application of the local development planning, which shall reflect a shared vision supported by the local population.

Hopefully this project will be the means to implement the will and materialize the vision that was put in light during the first phase of the project (in reference to Mr. Ashi's hope)

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING.