



## A Neighborhood of Friends

Local Governance and Civil Society Development Program

gtz

التعاون الإنمائي الألماني الفلسطيني



German Palestinian Development Cooperation

## A Neighborhood of Friends

Local governments form the backbone of public administration in the Palestinian Territory. Regardless of whether you want to build a house, open a store, obtain a water connection or get information on the solid waste collection in your area – your first port of call is the municipal office. For most Palestinians, it is the closest public institution to them, responsible for providing the majority of basic services. Nonetheless, local governments have suffered due to the lasting economic and political crisis. The local economy is stagnant, and many citizens are unable to pay tariffs and municipal taxes. As a result, local government budgets are shrinking and they are finding it increasingly difficult to provide key municipal services.

It needs good governance on the municipal side, well-trained personnel, transparent and standardized procedures and sufficient funds to ensure a high-quality provision of basic services. The German-Palestinian "Local Governance and Civil Society Development Program", commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is jointly implemented by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the German Development Service (DED) and German Political Foundations. It aims at strengthening local governments in their service delivery while supporting national institutions to set appropriate framework conditions for local governance.

On the national level, regulatory and supervisory functions, inter-governmental relations and local government financing are core issues. For example, guidelines for strategic municipal development and investment planning have been developed together with the Ministry of Local Government, the Ministry of Planning, the Municipal Development and Lending Fund and a group of municipalities. Moreover, GTZ is working with the Association of Palestinian Local Governments to exchange good

practices and develop innovative ideas.

The local level is of equal importance. The program supports local governments as they modernize their administrative structures, introduce innovation in their service delivery and strengthen transparent financial management. Municipal by-laws are updated and amended, modernized geographic information management systems improve the planning capacity, and the registration and validation of municipal assets provides the basis for sustainable financial management. The program has also helped to set-up so-called "One-Stop-Shops." These citizen advice centers are the first step for people seeking assistance in most official matters. Here, they get all the services in one place – no matter whether their concern is about building licenses or waste collection. This is not only more convenient for the citizens but also saves a lot of time. Because of the success of One-Stop-Shops, many municipalities plan to expand them.

In addition to better trained municipal staff and improved procedures, the responsible role of citizens is crucial to every well-functioning municipality. Political planning and decision-making processes are increasingly becoming a joint effort in local communities. Local non-governmental organizations, private-sector associations and other civil society institutions now get together to identify the development needs of their hometowns. By bringing together local stakeholders and authorities, the program supports local reform processes, increases the local population's involvement and promotes the development of democratic structures. Citizens themselves now raise their hands, point to issues most important to them and discuss potential improvements. These efforts have already born fruit: the tariff collection of the municipalities of Ramallah, Al Bireh and Beitunia has increased by more than 60 percent over the last three years.

## A ROAD TO COOPERATION

Once separate towns, the municipalities of Ramallah, Al Bireh and Beitunia have come closer together over the past years – at first physically, but now on an administrative and political level. Supported by the Palestinian-German "Local Governance and Civil Society Development Program," the municipalities started to cooperate on different issues, such as building regulations and solid waste collection, as well as to harmonize certain administrative matters. The cooperation has been a big success for everyone involved. "I just moved from my old house into a new one, which is only a few streets away but in a different municipality," says Rana Nasser. "A couple of years ago it would have been an exhausting bureaucratic effort to go to all the different offices, but thanks to the One-Stop-Shops and smoother procedures, it was no problem at all." The three towns have now drawn up a plan for mutual investment projects and a joint coordination body is in charge of their implementation. One big project is the construction of a ring road linking the three neighboring cities while freeing the center of heavy traffic. A smart road to cooperation!





## GTZ

As an international cooperation enterprise for sustainable development with worldwide operations, the federally owned Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH supports the German Government in achieving its development-policy objectives. It provides viable, forwardlooking solutions for political, economic, ecological and social development in a globalized world. Working under difficult conditions, GTZ promotes complex reforms and change processes. In cooperation with local and international partners, the focus is on strengthening capabilities and competencies of people and institutions in the conflict-shaken Palestinian Territory in order to improve people's living conditions on a sustainable basis.

German Technical Cooperation

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Design & Layout: MEDIA DESIGN, Sana'a, Yemen  
Print: TURBO Design, Ramallah  
Photos: Khaled Jarrar, Rani Daoud  
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July 2008