



STUDY OF LOCAL
AUTHORITIES
ASSOCIATIONS OF
EUROPEAN UNION
PARTNER COUNTRIES –
MEWA – REGIONAL
REPORT

Dialogue and capacity building of
local and regional authorities
in EU partner countries
in the fields of development
and local governance

2015



PLATFORMA

The European voice of **Local** and
Regional authorities for development



Study of Local Authorities Associations of European Union
Partner Countries – MEWA – Regional Report

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STAY OF PLAY OF THE ASSOCIATIONS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE REGION

1. Current situation: diagnosis/description

UCLG-MEWA is constituted by 15 countries where the main associations of local authorities are the Arab Towns Organization (ATO), the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA), the Bureau Technique des Villes Libanaises (BTVL), the Union of Municipalities of Gaza, the Union of Municipalities of Turkey (UMT).

As Turkey is not included in the neighborhood policy of the European Union, Turkish associations have been excluded of the study. Thus UCLG-MEWA contacted ATO, APLA, BTVL and the Union of Municipalities of Gaza to participate in the survey and prepare a fiche to present their organizations.

We collected answers from ATO, APLA, BTVL and UCLG-MEWA.

Type of associations

APLA is a semi-governmental organization while ATO, BTVL and UCLG-MEWA are associations. The four organizations aim to represent local authorities in platforms dedicated to debate on development. APLA and BTVL have a national coverage while ATO and UCLG-MEWA have a regional one. All organizations have a voluntary membership.

Structure of the lead of the association

APLA and UCLG-MEWA have a President elected for, respectively, 2 and 3 years. UCLG-MEWA completes its Executive Board by 5 co-Presidents, a Treasurer and an Ombudsman. The BTVL has a President and 2 Vice-Presidents.

All organizations have governing bodies that allow a broad involvement of members. APLA and UCLG-MEWA has both an Executive Bureau and a Council (with respectively: 23 and 30 members for the Executive Bureau and 45 members each for the Council). The BTVL is led by the 14 members of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors which is gathered every three months. ATO is led by a Board of Directors which meets every year.

Administration

With a staff comprised between 8 and 24 persons organizations of the MEWA region are small to medium sized. The BTVL has a team of 8, APLA 10 persons while UCLG-MEWA Secretariat General employs 20 persons and ATO has a staff of 24 persons.

50% to 80% of the teams are composed by technical experts and high level managerial staff. The lack of specification of the survey does not allow a more detailed analysis of the capacity of organization.





Financial management

APLA declared USD 168,000 as annual budget but it was mentioned that due to delay in collecting membership fees the deficit of APLA avoid relevant calculation of the budget. The BTVL has a USD 320,000 functioning budget (without projects). ATO and UCLG-MEWA declared respectively USD 3,000,000 and USD 3,600,000. ATO collect 50% of its budget via membership fees while the other 50% come from donor on a project basis. UCLG-MEWA gets 55% of its budget from membership fees collection, 35% from cooperation funds and 10% from transfers.

All organizations demonstrate caring for ensuring the greatest transparency in budgets management as they present it to the governing bodies for approval before implementation and at the end of every year.

LG association facilities

APLA, BTVL, ATO and UCLG-MEWA dispose of internet, meetings rooms and video conference facilities (e.g. Skype); UCLG-MEWA is currently working on reconstituting a physical and virtual library. APLA has no access to the internet.

Membership

APLA has 397 members after amalgamation which represents a very high proportion of Palestinian local governments. BTVL has 86 members (65 municipalities and 21 municipal unions) which are representative of the whole territory and of all sizes of municipalities. UCLG-MEWA has 129 city members and 12 national or sub-regional association members in 13 countries of the region with various degree of participation from one member (Afghanistan) to 76 (Turkey). ATO has 486 members from 22 countries.

Communication

ATO, APLA, BTVL and UCLG-MEWA use social networks, website and newsletter. It was found that the website of APLA is not accessible by the time of the survey and the website of ATO is not updated regularly.

Capacity Building

ATO, APLA and BTVL organize training and capacity building programs for their staff, UCLG-MEWA has not yet identified resources and priorities to organize such programs.

International relations and cooperation

Both national and regional LAGs of the MEWA region have strong links with international community. All members are in relation with UCLG and its members. They also mention their relations with the European Union, UNDP, UN-Habitat and bilateral development agencies (mainly American, German and French).

General information on countries and local governments

Lebanon is a parliamentary democratic republic governed by the Constitution of 23 May 1926 with the latest amendment in 1990 August 21. Since its independence in 1943, Lebanon has adopted a confessional political system based on the distribution of the political power proportionately amongst the religious communities – Christians and Muslims.

Lebanon is divided into six governorates (*mohafazat*): Beirut, North Lebanon, Mount Lebanon, South Lebanon, Bekaa, and Nabatiyah. Each governorate is administered by a Governor (*Muhafiz*) appointed by the Council of Ministers upon a proposal from the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities. The governorates are further subdivided into districts (*qadat*), each of which is presided over by a District Commissioner (*Kaemakam*). The governorates and their subdivisions, although enjoying a significant part of local competencies, function as the representatives of the central government at the locality. The local authorities, on the other hand, are represented by the municipalities and their unions.

It is stipulated in Article 1 of the Municipal Act of 1977 that: "The municipality is a local administration exercising, within the scope of its territory, the powers entrusted thereto by the law. The municipality shall hereby enjoy legal personality as well as financial and administrative independence." Building upon this definition, it is further stipulated in Article 2 that "a municipality is established in each town, village or group of villages."

In this context, municipalities are established in communities with at least 500 inhabitants. The municipalities elect their own councils, which in turn elect mayors and vice mayors. According to the figures issued by the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities in February 2011, the number of municipalities in Lebanon has reached 945.

According to the figures issued by the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities in February 2009, currently there are 42 unions, which are distributed across the five governorates (*mohafazat*) in the following way: 11 are in Mount Lebanon, 11 in North Lebanon, 5 in Nabatiyeh, 5 in South Lebanon, and 10 in Bekaa. In total 600 out of 945 municipalities are represented in the Union.

Palestine

Palestine is a Federal State. Palestine referred to by the United Nations and international legal bodies as the "Occupied Palestinian Territory", it comprises the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the territories currently occupied by Israel.

After the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip were divided into three areas, whereby "Area A" refers to the area under Palestinian National Authority security and civilian control, "Area B" refers to the area under Palestinian civilian and Israeli security control, and "Area C" refers to the area under full Israeli control such as settlements.

Palestine is administratively divided into sixteen (16) governorates, with eleven (11) in West Bank and five (5) in Gaza. These encompass in the West Bank the governorates of Jenin, Tubas, Tulkarm, Nablus, Qalqilya, Salfit, Ramallah and Al-Bireh, Jericho, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron; and in the Gaza Strip the governorates of North Gaza, Gaza, Deir al-Balah, Khan Yunis and Rafah.

There are several levels of local governments in Palestine, but elections are conducted only for "local councils", which are equivalent to city and village councils. Other levels of local government include governorates, joint services councils, project committees and refugee camps, but voters do not vote for these institutions.

Local governance units in the Palestinian Territories are fragmented and the sizes of the local districts vary from a population of 1,000 to almost 600,000. There are over 200 local councils with a population of less than 5,000; all of these local councils are located in West Bank. Over 115 local districts in the West Bank have populations under 1,000 residents. Instead of merging them with the larger districts, the Ministry of Local Government has classified them as "project committees" and excluded them from elections.





2. Quality analysis: limits/difficulties and advantages/force

Policy Dimension

LGAs of the MEWA region evaluate in a very positive manner the recognition of national government and international community. Legacy of LGAs is mainly their participation to the preparation of new laws on local authorities.

National LGAs present a broad and representative membership while due to the political instability regional LGAs do not cover the region completely.

In both type of LGAs broad board of directors and large governing bodies ensure a great representativity.

Members are informed of the activities of the organization via official communiqué and annual report. They are invited to participate in every activity on a voluntary basis and under specific criteria when the number of participants is limited.

Management

APLA, ATO and BTVL have a written elaborate strategic plan developed in participatory manner and which demonstrates realistic extension of current activities including vision/mission statements, mid-term and long-term objectives, strategies, programmes and financial plan. UCLG-MEWA presents also a written multi-year strategic plan developed in participatory manner describing what LGA does but it is loosely connected to long-term goals and ongoing activities and often planned based on unrealistic resource expectation and without membership involvement. To strengthen ownership of its strategic plan by its members and to make it more realistic UCLG-MEWA established 7 committees which are in charge of determining policies and projects of the organization on specific topics.

On one hand, APLA, ATO and BTVL mention that the recruitment of all staff is done purely on merit, professional expertise and experience. Training and development plans take account of personal development plans and each staff member has equal chance of being trained to improve skills and performance. Staff is highly motivated to achieve results and productivity is high. On the other hand UCLG-MEWA pointed out that some staff members are recruited on merit while others are not (appointed by member cities). Training tends to be *ad hoc* and for selected number of staff who takes own initiatives to look for training opportunities. Staff motivation is limited and does not include fringe benefits.

ATO and BTVL mentioned about their capacity and resources to develop high quality project proposals and win additional funding and implement activities in line with its strategic objectives. While APLA and UCLG-MEWA recognized that the relevant staff has knowledge of basic project management but lack professional skills.

ATO and BTVL announce periodical strategic reviews, feedback, monitoring and evaluation undertaken with clear and updated qualitative/quantitative indicators taking into consideration inputs from experts, the Board and relevant committees of membership; or Findings of such activities are presented and openly discussed by membership and used for decision-making. While APLA and UCLG-MEWA recognized that *ad hoc* monitoring and evaluation done internally without defined indicators and procedures.

Financial sustainability and transparency

Financial sustainability is the most problematic issue of LGAs in the region as APLA and UCLG-MEWA know problems in collecting fees. LGAs of the MEWA region expressed their concern about the financial sustainability due to the difficulties to collect membership fees in a context of instability.

All organizations have monitoring system and provide an annual financial report to their members. UCLG-MEWA publishes financial report every year with detailed information on its expenses. It plans to have an external audit report from a EU accredited agency.

Advocacy capacities and influence on policy making

Despite advocacy capacities are difficult to evaluate through the survey, one can note that all LGAs have relations with national governments and are, or have been, in position to propose new legislation.

Communication policies

UCLG-MEWA and BTVL provide regular information to their members and partners through circulars, website and social media account. Despite that none of the LGAs of the region estimates having a clear communication strategy.

International policies and networking membership

All organizations have international activities in partnership with UN Agencies, multilateral and bilateral development agencies.

3. Global perspectives and recommendations

What is the global situation of local government's organizations in the region?

Local government's organizations are in a difficult situation. The great instability in the region is the first obstacle to the development of strong LGAs since resources are reduced and the burden on local authorities increase. In addition the instability implies an high turnover in member cities and in LGAs, in this regard it can also lead to a lack of trust between actors.

LGAs in the MEWA region suffer from difficulties to collect regular and substantial fees from their members. As a consequence they cannot hire qualified staff or develop projects and attract more members or convince the current ones to pay their fees. At the same time this absence of activity affects the credibility of LGAs and weakens their advocacy work.

The lack of capacity, both financial and human, the lack efficient administrative structure and ownership from the members put at risk the realization of these organizations which aim to promote the role of local governments.

What the pressing needs to strengthen LGAs in the region?

As mentioned before the financial pressure is a huge burden on LGAs in the MEWA region. The region itself is not well decentralized with 7 monarchies, 1 territory occupied, 4 countries where the civil war is going on and only 2 countries and local governments have a very limited access to funding.

What could be done and how?

LGAs should take advantage of the general interest of the international community for local governments to participate in projects that will increase their prestige and resources. Using the charisma of local leaders LGAs can show the added value of local authorities' involvement in development projects.

To increase the level of their technical support LGAs should strengthen partnership with international and national agencies, universities, NGOs and civil society.

To increase the ownership of the membership LGAs should adopt clear rules of procedure where it is requested and deliver services according to priorities broadly agreed.



Within the current state of the play LGAs could focus on improving service delivery rather than directly promoting values that are still not broadly accepted at the central level.

Other observations

ANNEXES: TABLE FOR 2ND PART

Policy Dimension				
	APLA	ATO	BTVL	UCLG-MEWA
Recognition	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized
Legacy	Not Specified	Not Specified	Lot of Achievements presented	Not a lot of achievements
Level of Independence	Independent from the State	Independent from the State	Independent from the State	Independent from the State
Representativeness	Broad	Broad	Broad	Heterogeneous
Representativeness and role of board of directors	Good	Good	Good	Good
Regular operation of the association				





Management				
	APLA	ATO	BTVL	UCLG-MEWA
Strategy planning and business plan (short term or long term planning?)	Written elaborate strategic plan developed in participatory manner and demonstrates realistic extension of current activities including vision/mission statements, mid-term and long-term objectives, strategies, programmes and financial plan.			Written multi-year strategic plan developed in participatory manner describing what LGA does and is loosely connected to long-term goals and ongoing activities. OR Planning based on unrealistic resource expectation and without membership involvement.
Staff adequacy and capacities	Recruitment of all staff done purely on merit, professional expertise and experience. Training and development plans take account of personal development plans and each staff member has equal chance of being trained to improve skills and performance. Staff is highly motivated to achieve results and productivity is high.			Some staff members are recruited on merit while others are not (appointed by member cities). Training tends to be <i>ad hoc</i> and for selected number of staff who take own initiatives to look for training opportunities. Staff motivation is limited and does not include fringe benefits.
Appropriate structure for the institutional purpose	The relevant staff has knowledge of basic project management but lack professional skills.	LGA has capacity and resources to develop high quality project proposals and win additional funding and implement activities in line with its strategic objectives.		The relevant staff has knowledge of basic project management but lack professional skills.
M&E systems	<i>Ad hoc</i> monitoring and evaluation done internally without defined indicators and procedures.	Strategic reviews, feedback, monitoring and evaluation undertaken periodically with clear and updated qualitative/quantitative indicators taking into consideration inputs from experts, the Board and relevant committees of membership. OR Findings of such activities are presented and openly discussed by membership and used for decision-making.		<i>Ad hoc</i> monitoring and evaluation done internally without defined indicators and procedures.



Financial sustainability and transparency				
	APLA	ATO	BTVL	UCLG-MEWA
Financial situation	Deficit and difficulties to collect memberships fees			
Financial sustainability	50% of local authorities pay membership fees which are mostly used to cover operational costs, while donors fund most of the programmes and activities. No other sources of self-generated revenue. No strategy for financial sustainability and independence.	No information	Membership fees are collected despite a difficult environment	At least two other sources of self-generated income that together provide minimum of 10% of revenues. An unwritten Financial Sustainability Strategy in place, but not fully implemented.
Quality of financial management and control	Appropriate set of written financial management, control and accounting procedures, rules and regulations exist, but not strictly adhered to and lack key provisions such as check and balance system of fund management. UCLG-MEWA mentioned that staff engaged in financial management has only basic skills. ATO did not provide information on this point			
Audit reports quality	Appropriate set of written financial management, control and accounting procedures, rules and regulations exist, but not strictly adhered to and lack key provisions such as check and balance system of fund management. LGA generally follows transparent financial control practices that minimize potential for misuse of misappropriation funds, but not fully institutionalized. ATO did not provide information on this point.			

Advocacy				
	APLA	ATO	BTVL	UCLG-MEWA
Relations with national governments and parliament (e.g. participation in commissions),	YES	YES	YES	YES
Capacity to propose new legislation	YES	YES	YES	NO (but existing in the past)
Declarations and positions of the LGAs toward national policies,	No information	No information	Strong ability	NO
Networking capacities	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD



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