

BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO SYRIA'S MUNICIPALITIES

The Syrian government is engaged in a process of devolving the governance from the centre to the municipalities, aiming to support sustainable urban development and management; and providing a better livelihood and quality of life for the country's citizens.

There is a clear intent: "to create more independent, strategic and citizen-oriented municipalities with the vision and skills needed to develop great cities for everyone".

The Municipal Administration Modernisation programme (MAM) is supporting this process and vision through technical assistance - consulting advice, training, capacity building, provision of computer equipment and software. The European Commission is contributing financial support towards the programme totalling •18M; the Syrian government is providing a further •2.5M. The programme started on the 1st June 2005 and will last for approximately 42 months.

The •10M technical assistance support to the programme has been contracted to a consortium of EU companies led by WYG International, formerly IMC Consulting, from the UK. The consortium also includes Arcadis BMB and VNG International (The Association of Dutch Local Authorities) both from the Netherlands. WYG has deployed to the project four permanent long-term EU expert advisors to the project; there is funding for very significant

contributions from specialist consultants, both European and Syrian; and local support and coordinating staff have been appointed in the project management unit (PMU) in Damascus and in the six pilot cities. The PMU itself is led by a Syrian Project Director appointed by the Minister of Local Administration and Environment - the home ministry for the programme.

The pilot cities

The MAM project is being implemented in six cities across Syria: Aleppo in the north, Lattakia and Tartous on the Mediterranean, the centrally located city of Homs, Deir-Ez-Zor in the eastern desert and, of course, the capital city of Damascus. In their diverse ways, these are all places with pronounced character and individuality.



- **Damascus** the administrative, financial and communications capital of Syria, with an Old City, one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world and a World Heritage site that is one of Syria's most precious assets. The current actual population of the Damascus agglomeration is estimated at four million inhabitants.



- With over two million inhabitants **Aleppo** is the second largest city of the country and the commercial and cultural centre of northern Syria. It has been inhabited for more than 5,000 years and has long been a national and international crossroads. Its Old City is also a World Heritage site.

- **Homs** the capital of Homs Governorate, the largest in Syria, has almost 700,000 inhabitants. Agriculture, trade and industry play their roles in the economy of the Governorate and its capital, which by virtue of its central location, is an important hub in the national transportation network.

- **Lattakia** is the principal port of Syria. The city has just over 400,000 inhabitants. Exports passing through the port include agricultural products originating in the region as well as bitumen and asphalt. Lattakia's beaches attract many tourists.