

- Located in the eastern desert along the Euphrates on the route to the north and centre of an agriculturally and archeologically rich region, **Deir-Ez-Zour** has about 200,000 inhabitants. The economy has been supported through the inauguration of the Euphrates Dam and the discovery of oil in the area.

- The relatively small (120,000 inhabitants) town municipality of **Tartous** is a busy port town, the terminal of the oil pipeline from Iraq and a place with tourism potential. It has a small historic city and plans for an ambitious project on reclaimed land on the sea front.

MAM's successful implementation in these cities will create a platform and template for applying its principles nationwide.

Transferring power - a bold and crucial step

One of the main challenges of the MAM programme is to support the Syrian authorities, particularly the Ministry for Local Administration and Environment (MLAE), in the devolution of responsibility and authority in local matters - giving local people a greater say in their communities. Decentralising government is a bold step, but a necessary and fundamental one to achieve the reforms envisaged by the government.

Decentralisation means that the decision making process concerning local issues will be moved closer to the citizens and

thus the locally elected councils and officials will be provided with greater authority and responsibility. This also means that the national government will need to assist the local governments to enhance in enhancing their management and public service capacities but will no longer need to regulate in detail the operations of the municipalities. More than before, they will be able to take their own decisions. The Ministry of Local Administration and Environment will lead this process. It is preparing a revision of the Law on Local Administration (No 15), which dates back to 1971. The MAM project will support the Ministry in this significant undertaking and will propose amendments to this law (No 15 of 1971). Amending the present law is a first step, while more far-reaching changes in local administration are going to be proposed prepared based on best international experience



but most importantly based on specific observations and analysis carried out in at the six pilot cities by a team of European and national experts.

Preparing far-reaching changes will take time. It will require extensive consultations, seeking the ideas and opinions of the people who will be most affected - the Governors and Mayors and council members, specialists in the ministries and the universities and importantly, the citizens. On the basis of these discussions and the conclusions reached, proposals will be designed for totally new laws on local administration and for the regulations to be made under the corresponding regulatory framework.

There are many constraints on the institutional development of Syria relating to the centralised nature of government. The need for change is unquestioned. - and the process of change will be based on knowledge and best practice experience and will be supported through the creation of a Centre of Excellence in Training and Development for Local Government. A Leadership development programme is planned for the first year of the project as well as support for examining the structure and operation of the municipalities, making improvements especially where these affect the delivery of services.

Over time e-governance will play its role in improving