

BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO SYRIA'S MUNICIPALITIES - continued

service delivery. As part of an initial development the project intends to focus on three municipalities, Homs, Tartous, and the Old City of Damascus, reviewing existing organisational procedures in administrative areas as a basis for the introduction of e-government, specifically the delivery of services using information systems and one stop windows.

The project is also tasked with encouraging equal opportunities, with all project partners being aware of the critical need to fully involve women in local government; as leaders, managers and as citizens. Good practice guidelines will be made widely known, and may be adopted by central and local government organisations. Within the project, gender will be 'made visible', by ensuring that women are given due credit in project publications, references in reports, and so on.

A series of practical action plans

Strategic planning has traditionally focused on land use. There have been few comprehensive local development plans integrating economic, social and environmental factors. In today's strategic vision of the local communities a desire to improve the quality of life, preserve cultural heritage and ensure stable socio-economic and political environments is of most significant importance and requires effective

responses from the local administrations. Even where such plans do exist, they are seldom endorsed by all those involved: the municipality, the private sector and civil society. Part of MAM's purpose is to change this approach, through helping selected cities to determine their own agenda for strategy development, in particular supporting economic development, based on wide community participation. First, visioning workshops, held in each selected city, will explore a vision for the city, taking into account its strengths and constraints. Second, there will be an examination of successful development strategies in Syria, the Middle East and Europe - ideas that have brought about the transformation of cities. Third, application workshops will consider how to apply new ideas and knowledge to Syrian local development situations. Once this three-part phase is complete, MAM foresees the implementation of pilot projects.

One of MAM's aim is to develop a strategy for mobilising the private sector in order to improve investment in local infrastructure and the efficiency of local services, by guiding and promoting this process and working to mobilise the external resources necessary. To make this possible, there will need to be an integration of public service approaches and commercial management practice through various forms of Public Private Partnerships (PPP).



Encouraging development involves being able to measure development, for example, whether more jobs really are being created, whether business is growing, whether the city's image is improving. For these purposes, MAM proposes will get involved in supporting the development of a Local Decision Support Centre (LDSC). The LDSC is to become a national Urban Observatory as an information, research and policy instrument. The cities will be able to see in what ways they are developing or lagging behind and this will help them focus on priority actions.

One instrument of policy to encourage sustainable development is known as Local Agenda 21 (LA21). In essence this is a tool for measuring the impact of any development so as to encourage environmentally sustainable development. The project will be introducing LA21 in selected pilot cities and will then encourage its dissemination throughout Syria.