

BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO SYRIA'S MUNICIPALITIES - continued

basic computers; the system is often unable to offer automatic billing, reminders for non-payment, management information or the posting of cash. There is no provision for taxpayers who cannot afford to pay and debts are left on file without time limit. Clearly, firm and decisive action is called for.

Syria's taxation regime needs renewal - total modernisation. MAM plans to assist by establishing a major source of local tax through transferring the property tax from central to local government, and through a fundamental review of all local duties and fees.

Workshops on public finance and taxes aimed at using the knowledge of Municipal Directors of Finance - and involving them in the change process - will take place and a customer-centred culture will be developed through:

- Staff training.
- Customer service areas.
- Strategies for those unable to pay.
- Reduced bureaucracy in complaints handling.
- The empowerment of those dealing with the public.
- Automated payment methods.
- A marketing strategy.

Fundamental changes will be implemented in one or two municipalities in order to develop modern financial management practices and systems suitable for wider application and dissemination.



Activities will include scrutinising the legal framework, designing a budget classification system, designing an accounting system and a total review of financial procedures, especially for their adaptation to the new system. Solutions for a range of problems in property matters in general will be proposed, including compensation in cases of expropriation, lean procedures and modern property asset management.

Working towards a better quality of life - better delivery for some key services

The increase in the volume of traffic in Syria's cities in the years to come will be huge with serious impact on the quality of life and the economic performance of cities. Accessibility, traffic safety, health, the environment and urban heritage will suffer. Current public transport provision will not be able to cope with demand. Citizens

will suffer the consequences, unless a more integrated approach to traffic and transport planning is adopted, covering traffic safety policy, parking policy, environmental policy and closely-related aspects of transportation and urban planning. The project will work with selected cities to improve traffic and transportation practices. A start has been made through advising Damascus on its proposed metro system.

The Syrian Government has adopted a national master plan for solid waste management, but support will be needed for its implementation at the local level. Several developments will be supported by MAM, including raising public awareness, assessing current waste management practices, developing a programme for further implementation of the master plan in the cities, providing options for significant increased cost recovery, and potential private sector involvement.