

## **Towards an Active Participation of Youth in the Creation of Local Environmental Solutions**

**Hadeel al Qatameen | March 2023**

This paper was funded by a grant from the US State Department. The opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions, findings, and conclusions of the US State Department.

This paper was drafted by individual young authors who were selected to participate in the Youth Media Program Jeel 01. The opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed herein are those of the author(s), and do not necessarily reflect the opinions, findings, or conclusions of Generations For Peace.

## Introduction

Municipalities house different local structures, all of which lack substantive youth participation. Excluding youth in the decision-making process and creation of innovative solutions in municipal councils removes the opportunity to benefit from the youth's vital capabilities in providing public services and responding to crises, especially environmental challenges. Additionally, election and appointment mechanisms in municipal councils do not support the selection of qualified youth competent to handle the aforementioned responsibilities. Simply put, there is no legislative and financial foundations that back the effective integration of youth in the said councils.

This paper proposes the formation of youth working teams aiming to help municipalities identify environmental challenges, and address these challenges on community level. The youth working teams should cooperate with local municipalities and in particular with the Ministry of Youth, which, through its Third Strategic Objective,<sup>1</sup> aims "to organise and invest in youth potential, in order to ensure their effective participation in sustainable human development and the consolidation of teamwork and volunteerism values". The paper primarily targets the Ministry of Youth and other partners, such as the Ministry of Local Administration and municipalities interested in applying the model.

The focus of national programmes for developing the skills and capabilities of youth, including "youth councils" and "youth shadow councils", is directed towards engagement in public and local work. However, practices in this context are still modest and superficial compared to the aspired level of effective youth participation.

Jordanian youth have proven their ability to engage in finding practical and creative solutions at the local, regional, and global levels, going beyond traditional forms of youth participation. Therefore, the energies of youth should be utilised on a higher level in a manner that supports their direct participation in municipalities and decision-making, and to start seizing lost opportunities within the capabilities and creative energies of youth, especially the unemployed and fresh university graduates.

As such, the paper proposes a different methodology for youth participation in local administrative work. While the youth councils supplementing the municipalities aim to introduce young people to the structures and framework of municipal work, contribute to surveying societal needs, and provide recommendations to decision-makers, the paper proposes the formation of youth working groups that focus on the environmental axis in municipalities. New axes can also be created subsequently when expanding the implementation of this model, in which these groups are given flexible roles interwoven with municipal and local councils' other functions. This allows these groups to identify and survey real societal needs and propose an appropriate action plan to address and implement them.

---

<sup>1</sup>Jordanian Ministry of Youth, "Institutional Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Youth" (2021-2024), 2022. <https://qbd.gov.jo/uploads/files/qbd/law-min/2022/en/3050.pdf>

Notwithstanding, these working groups are intended to collaborate and not 'compete' with municipal councils in providing creative solutions and simultaneously help alleviate the local workload on municipalities. The model also aims to build the capacity of youth in community participation, local work, and participatory planning through learning and practical experience that shifts them from the lecture-based learning model to a project-based learning one.

## **Municipalities in Jordan**

Jordanian municipalities are civil institutions with financial and administrative independence in accordance with the provisions of Law No. 41 of 2015. As a result of the process of merging municipalities that began in 2001, the number of municipalities in Jordan has been reduced from 328 to 100 municipalities today, with the exception of the Greater Amman Municipality, the Aqaba Special Economic Zone, and the Petra region.<sup>2</sup>

Due to poor government revenue in Jordan, centralisation has been the dominant system since the Kingdom's independence. Accordingly, only a few services were delegated to the municipalities. While the law set in 1955 gave them the right to manage 39 services, the reality is that the central government delivers all essential services. These include water supply (Water Authority), electricity and gas, sanitation services, primary education and health, security, public transportation, housing (the Public Corporation for Housing and Urban Development), and environmental preservation.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the ideal situation for the development of local work is for municipalities to provide services for sanitation, water, parks, buildings, population, and environment such as general cleaning, vegetation of vacant spaces, soil reclamation, restoration of degraded ecosystems, and response to environmental hazards including floods, wildfires, and others.<sup>4</sup>

## **Responsibilities of Local Administrative Councils**

Four councils share local administrative functions at the governorate and municipal levels: the municipal council, the local council, the executive council, and the provincial council. The municipal and local councils are located within the municipality's structure. Their most prominent tasks are strategic planning, devising budgets, local development, and community participation. The Local Administration Law detailed the faculties of the local councils, which include setting up development projects, determining which streets to be built and which to be amended, shaping the distribution networks of electricity and gas, identifying areas that need sanitation, public parks, gardens, or other amenities.<sup>5</sup>

## **Community participation in local administrative councils**

One of the most prominent principles of the work of local councils is community participation, which means the participation of citizens in political, economic, and social life, and includes defining the

---

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Local Administration, "Annual Report for the Years 2018-2019," 2020.

[https://www.mola.gov.jo/ebv4.0/root\\_storage/ar/eb\\_list\\_page/yearlybook2018-2019-0.pdf](https://www.mola.gov.jo/ebv4.0/root_storage/ar/eb_list_page/yearlybook2018-2019-0.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Maryam Ababsa, "Municipalities and the Challenge of Local Regional Governance," in The Jordan Atlas, 2013.

<https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/7794>

<sup>4</sup> Ziyad Ayed Ziyadat, "Municipalities shifting from the role of service management to leading sustainable development and managing projects through development plans," The Arab Journal for Scientific Publishing, Issue 35 (September 2 2021) <https://bit.ly/3etCsnG>

<sup>5</sup> Ali Hatem Abdel Hamid Al-Ani, "Administrative Decentralization and its Applications in Jordan and Iraq," Middle East University-Jordan – Master Thesis, 2016. [https://meu.edu.jo/libraryTheses/5879d7c7c7da6\\_1.pdf](https://meu.edu.jo/libraryTheses/5879d7c7c7da6_1.pdf)

general orientation of the state. Community participation is achieved through citizen involvement in committees and councils responsible for preparing, implementing, and following development plans. For fair and equal representation, it is necessary to involve the less fortunate segments of population (or less fortunate members of community) with less access to opportunities, such as youth, women, the elderly, and people with disabilities in setting, planning, and implementing development projects. Community participation is linked to participatory planning, which means "joint actions on the part of local people and local administrative councils to formulate development plans and select the best available alternatives for their implementation". This is achieved through the discussion and negotiation of the two bodies, namely local administration and local people, to reach the optimal decision. The ultimate objective of such operations is to enable local capacities to sort and mobilize the local resources necessary to achieve comprehensive and sustainable development and to build institutional structures.<sup>6</sup>

The Guide for Council Members, male and female, prepared by the National Committee for Women's Affairs, outlines a number of essential means to involve citizens in local work, which includes involving them in the action plan of the four councils as a first step, consultation by taking their opinion on every decision, and informing them of the progress and outcome of projects, assigning them specific roles within the framework of the project to be implemented, and finally, inviting them to attend council sessions.<sup>7</sup>

### **Youth Councils**

The idea of establishing youth councils was previously applied in several municipalities, such as in Irbid and Ma'an, to encourage youth to participate in and be educated on the nature of municipal work and to contribute to the municipal council by conferring opinions and proposals to the local community and the municipality. This includes encouraging citizens to participate in elections, cleanliness campaigns, raising awareness about the importance of maintaining public hygiene and administering questionnaires about municipal services that will exhibit citizens' opinions about these services.

An example of youth council projects is the Youth Shadow Council project in local administration, which was implemented starting from 2020 in cooperation between Hivos, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). The Youth Shadow Council included more than 50 young men and women from three regions in Jordan: Naour, Madaba, and Husban. The role of the youth was to identify societal needs according to the annual local assessment guide and then report to the local administration and the local councils.<sup>8</sup>

The municipal youth council model is used globally in many countries, mainly in Europe. The model is educational, considering work is being done to provide young people with new life and

---

<sup>6</sup> Motivators for Training Company, "Tasks and Responsibilities for the Work of Provincial, Municipal and Local Councils in Jordan: A Guide for Council Members," First Edition, 2018.

<https://women.jo/~women/sites/default/files/SystemAssets/0f3dab8e-6771-4781-b43a-47e52e1326fc.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Hivos, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Youth Shadow Councils in Local Administration", 2020.

<https://irckhf.org/projects/youth-shadow-councils-in-local-administration/>

learning experiences from municipalities that are progressive in institutional work.<sup>9</sup> This could undermine replicating the model in its entirety in Jordan due to the great disparity in the institutional context and availability of resources, as municipalities do not have sufficient funding to cover all the necessary services and building the required human capacities for the model to work. On the other hand, it is possible to use youth in Jordan to provide local skills and competencies for municipalities.

### **National Youth Strategy**

The objectives of the National Youth Strategy (2019-2025) converge with those of community participation and youth councils on several axes: youth and active citizenship; participation and effective leadership; and the rule of law and good governance. Under these axes, several strategic objectives are "promoting the concepts of culture, citizenship, the rooting of national identity, and infusing the values of belonging, justice, and participation without discrimination". Likewise, the project entails "warranting youth to participate in provincial and decentralized local councils". This makes youth participation in local administration a primary goal of the Ministry. In addition, the <sup>10</sup> Ministry seeks to "raise the levels of health awareness among the youth and promote the use of healthy patterns", through the "maintenance of a healthy environment and the reduction of pollution" project, which confirms the Ministry's interest in the inclusion of youth in reducing pollution and providing environmental solutions.

### **Suggested Alternative: Youth Working Groups**

While the youth councils accompanying the municipalities aim to introduce youth to the structure of municipal work, surveying societal needs and providing recommendations to decision-makers, the paper proposes a different model of youth participation in local administration, portrayed in the formation of youth working groups that focus on the environmental axis in municipality's work. These groups have flexible roles that converge with the municipal and the local council, allowing them to identify and survey real societal needs, and propose an appropriate plan of action to address them.

The members of the youth group are chosen based on several factors determined by the Ministry of Youth in accordance with the visions of the National Youth Strategy, and in cooperation with the municipality participating in the program, while an advisory committee of experts in the field of environment and policies is formed, upon the recommendation of the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Local Administration and the Ministry of Youth. This committee provides technical advisory to the youth work groups when needed.

The roles of the youth group include the following steps:

**First:** The youth group engages in discussion sessions with the local community created by the municipality's Local Development Directorate. The aim is to identify the societal needs in the

---

<sup>9</sup> Sladjana Petkovic and Manfred Zentner, "Mapping Youth Work at the Municipal Level in the Countries Participating in the Europe Goes Local Project", 2017. <https://www.europegoeslocal.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Mapping-municipal-youth-work.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Jordanian Ministry of Youth, National Youth Strategy, 2019.

[https://moy.gov.jo/sites/default/files/jordan\\_national\\_youth\\_strategy\\_2019-2025\\_english\\_compressed\\_1.pdf](https://moy.gov.jo/sites/default/files/jordan_national_youth_strategy_2019-2025_english_compressed_1.pdf)

environment, develop a general understanding of the broader community's surveying tools, and more accurately discern the environmental problems the region suffers from.

**Second:** The most prominent environmental issues are identified, and community surveying tools are developed, and a general plan of action is placed in consultation with the local council and the advisory committee formed to support the youth group. The group also contributes to developing strategic and executive plans for municipalities in the field of environment.

**Third:** In cooperation with the local council, the youth group creates a budget for the action plan for environment axis.

**Fourth:** After the budget is approved, the youth group begins the field survey of their communities, and based on the surveys' output, a detailed plan of action is determined to solve an environmental issue.

**Fifth:** The team is committed to implementing the plan according to the set timeline, with follow-up done by the local council and the advisory committee.

**Sixth:** After the action plan is implemented, an achievement report is written, summarizing the outputs and achievements of the youth group's work, to be submitted to the Ministry of Youth, the advisory committee, and the Ministry of Local Administration.

Note: Below are the stages in which the model proposes a role for youth in local and municipal work (an asterisk indicates the exact stage).



\*\*Translation (from right to left):

Provincial Council

Executive Council

Municipal Council

Local Development Directorate in the Municipality

Local Council

Local Development Directorate in the Municipality

## Local Community Discussion Sessions

Determining the needs of the province, and the development and service projects, and prioritizing those needs

Preparing a manual of the municipality's needs, prioritizing and submitting them to the Executive Council for review

Setting sectoral objectives

Studying needs and make suggestions

Providing technical support and coordination

Dialogue sessions to develop needs at the Local Council Level

Picture 1: The course of preparing the needs manual with the participation of citizens



\*\*Translation (right to left):

Provincial Council

Local Development Directorate in the Municipality

Local Council

Directorate of Local Development in the Municipality

Local Community Discussion Sessions

Preparing strategic and executive plans, and submitting them to the Executive Council for review

1. Studying project and plan proposals received from Local Councils

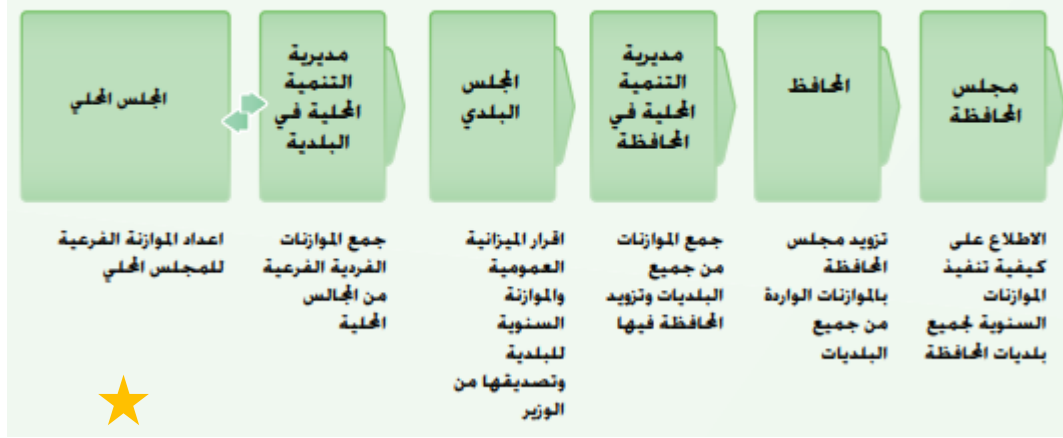
2. Setting sectoral objectives

Providing input and suggestions regarding strategic and operational plans

Providing technical support and coordination

Dialogue sessions to set sectoral and sub sectoral goals and challenges of local councils

Picture 2: Municipal strategic and operational plans



\*\*Translation (right to left):

Provincial Council

Governor

Directorate of Local Development in the Governorate

Municipal Council

Directorate of Local Development in the Municipality

Local Council

View how to implement the annual budgets of all the municipalities of the governorate

Providing the Provincial Council with budgets received from all municipalities

Collecting budgets from all municipalities and submitting them to the governorate

Approving the balance sheet and the annual budget of the municipality and ratifying them by the Minister

Collecting sub-individual budgets from local councils

Preparing the sub-budget for the local council

Picture 3: The developmental trajectory of municipal budget preparation

This paper was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of State, and administered by Generations For Peace. The opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions, findings, and conclusions of the U.S. Department of State or Generations For Peace.



generationsforpeace  
أجيال السلام

يتم تنفيذ برنامج جيل 01 من قبل هيئة أجيال السلام بدعم  
من السفارة الأمريكية في الأردن.