

Governance

Strengthening Women in Decision-Making in the Middle East (LEAD)

Background and Objective

Many Middle Eastern countries are ranking low in terms of women’s political participation and their inclusion in decision-making. Women holding public office positions are often isolated from important decision-making circles and thematically limited to stereotypical areas related to social issues. However, public administrations can only meet the needs of the whole population in strengthening democratic structures and sustainable development by involving women in community development and decision-making at all levels.

This is why on behalf of the BMZ the regional GIZ programme “Strengthening Women in Decision-Making in the Middle East” (LEAD) aims at strengthening women’s political participation in selected communities in the Palestinian Territories, Jordan and Lebanon. In cooperation with its national partners, LEAD adapts its efforts to country specific strategies and engages in the following complementary areas:

- Empowering women in local politics and local government through trainings, mentoring and micro project funds;
- Promoting a gender-sensitive environment in local governance through the implementation of recommendations based on gender audits of municipalities;
- Strengthening existing or newly established gender platforms and networks that coordinate the objectives and activities of all relevant actors, including civil society.

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| Project name | Strengthening Women in Decision-Making in the Middle East (LEAD) |
| Commissioned by | The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) |
| Project region | Palestinian Territories, Jordan, Lebanon |
| Partners in the Palestinian Territories | Ministry of Local Government (MoLG), Gender Forum in Local Governance, Civil Society Organizations (CSO) |
| Partners in Jordan | The Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW), Women for Cultural Development (NAMAA), Al Hayat Center for Civil Society Development |
| Partners in Lebanon | The National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW), The Lebanese Organization for Studies and Training (LOST) and other CSO |
| Duration | February 2015 – February 2022 |

Men are involved in all areas as change agents. At the same time measures are taken to raise awareness in institutions and the public on the importance and acceptance of women as community leaders.



From left to right:

(1) Female local council members (mentees) and women leaders (mentors) at the midterm mentoring event - part of the regional LEAD projects (2018)

(2) Female local council members (mentees) at the mentoring team building workshop in the Palestinian Territories (2018)

Achievements

The regional nature of **LEAD** provides distinctive approaches to promote knowledge transfer among the three countries. The concept of Gender Audits - to facilitate gender mainstreaming in selected municipalities - was introduced for the first time in Jordan and Lebanon. It has relied on the experience expanded from the Palestinian Territories, and the qualified experts trained by LEAD. Through the implementation of a regional mentoring program for female politicians, LEAD has provided a platform for exchange, peer learning and network building among 72 women leaders in the region.

In the **Palestinian Territories**, more than 2000 women attended specialized trainings in different fields and awareness raising activities. Target groups include council members, civil servants in Local Government Units (LGUs), Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) staff, and women activists. Additionally, 32 community projects led by female council members were implemented. LEAD supports two gender networks to lobby towards higher political participation of women in local governance. Special focus was given on working with men towards higher support for women. The programme worked on developing digital solutions to advance Palestinian women's political leadership and rights by increasing their access to information, creating networks and mobilizing the community.

In **Jordan**, 600 female council members and women activists were trained on leadership, managerial and technical skills. In addition, ca. 1000 men and women participated in awareness sessions and debates on gender-sensitive decentralization processes. Around 300 young people attended seminars on civic education and community activism, based on which they implemented community initiatives and awareness campaigns in their communities reaching approx. 10,000 community members. Furthermore, two national gender networks are being strengthened with the development of multi-annual network strategies and securing sustainable resources. In addition, the project has launched its first community project fund in Jordan and supported 18 women leaders in implementing community projects which serve around 38,000 citizens.

In **Lebanon**, 787 women and 74 men participated in LEAD activities in the different regions directly or through LEAD partners. They completed trainings on civic engagement, municipal work, project cycle management and other topics. 33 community projects by women council members or activists were implemented in different communities, responding to community needs and improving services for more than 250.000 citizens. In Baalbak-Hermel and through exchanges with key actors, e.g. mayors and religious leaders, the women were able to include their ideas into local decision-making. This exchange was formalized under the name of "Women's Platform to Lead" comprising 320 women, who applied for registration as an NGO. In addition, six towns and one ministry adopted gender responsive action plans after conducting gender assessments.

Covid-19 Response

The LEAD Programme adopted the concept of mentoring as a tool to support a stronger participation of women in decision-making and management of local councils and local communities' affairs. Mentoring is an informal learning, where an experienced person assists another person in developing skills and knowledge that will enhance their political, professional and personal growth. In the Palestinian Territories, LEAD already implemented 2 mentoring projects with its local partners over the past years.

Currently, LEAD in cooperation with the Ministry of Local Government is working on a new mentoring project that aims at supporting female council members' role to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences. Specialized crisis management trainings and community initiatives will be supported. Mentors and mentees will work together to monitor and respond to the communities' priorities and needs. This will also include media campaigns and psychosocial support initiatives.

This project is part of a special initiative designed to stabilise and promote development in North Africa and the Middle East run by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Through the projects that make up this special initiative, BMZ is helping to open up economic and social prospects for people in the region.

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GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.

On behalf of Federal Ministry for Economic
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