CITIES: Fostering Committed and Capable Communities
USAID’s Cities Implementing Transparent, Innovative, and Effective Solutions (CITIES) project is a five-year effort, implemented by Chemonics, which takes advantage of the historic opening created by Jordan’s recent decentralization law to maximize citizens’ newfound agency. The program thereby amplifies citizen voices, works with officials to address their concerns, and holds the government accountable. CITIES equips local officials and community leaders throughout Jordan to work together, enhancing their ability and willingness to set priorities, generate and allocate resources, and govern in a citizen-centered way.

This critical juncture in Jordan’s democratic development presents an opening for consolidating democratic gains and leveraging systemic progress to cultivate a culture of citizen-centered governance. As Jordan grapples with newly decentralized power and a more empowered electorate, CITIES is injecting targeted resources, technical systems, and governance expertise into 33 partner municipalities across Jordan’s 12 governorates. As partner municipalities prioritize citizen concerns and efficient service delivery, their growing capacity is fueling a burgeoning commitment to governing, helping them progress on their journey to self-reliance (J2SR).

### CITIES’s Goals

- **Goal 1**: Identify, develop, and support innovative and sustainable solutions to improve service delivery
- **Goal 2**: Increase the sustainability of municipal operations, including newly decentralized responsibilities
- **Goal 3**: Enhance engagement between community members and the government
- **Goal 4**: Foster community cohesion

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<th>Governorate</th>
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<td>Balqa</td>
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CITIES has made progress in responding to several of the challenges laid out in USAID’s self-reliance learning agenda (SRLA). CITIES is uniquely positioned to help local officials identify and understand popular sentiments and citizen demands, while supporting local governments in its mandate and its ability to respond effectively. In the SRLA, two questions provide a particularly helpful framing for assessing the effectiveness of efforts to enhance governance in a way that prioritizes constituents and leads to self-reliance.

SRLA Question 10: How can local, sub-national, national, and regional voices, priorities, and contributions be integrated into how USAID fosters self-reliance?

CITIES has spent significant time working with municipal officials to enhance communication, information management, and the broader task of implementing decentralization policy following the codification of the Decentralization Law and Law on Municipalities. Linking the subnational-level implementation and national-level policy components of programs — as CITIES has successfully done through work with local and national officials — can help build a field-based national policy agenda. CITIES worked with Municipal Local Development Units (MLDUs) in all 100 municipalities across the Kingdom to develop ‘needs lists,’ derived directly from citizens, which were used in developing the governorate-level budgets. These lists were also a part of the technical resources shared with Jordan’s Ministry of Interior (MOI) as critical components of budget preparation at the national level. With rich sets of information and lessons flowing up from the local level, national-level policies that support self-reliance can be made more locally appropriate, impactful, and sustainable. Programs like CITIES that have a broad geographic footprint of partner local governments can also act as conduits for information flows from the national to the local level, providing important support to dissemination and uptake of national policies that support self-reliance. As one example, CITIES supported election-related awareness building to promote Open and Accountable Governance, a key aspect of J2SR.

SRLA Question 12: How can we best measure USAID’s contribution to countries’ progress on their journeys to self-reliance at the local, sub-national, national, and regional levels?

The scale of CITIES allows for an important opportunity to capture rich, extensive data on the uptake of ‘best fit’ approaches by municipal officials and the degree to which local governments are responding to the unique constituent challenges expressed. Programs like CITIES typically collect a wide range of self-reliance-related data at the local level. These data — and lessons learned from their definition, collection, and analysis — could be used to support development of subnational analogues to J2SR metrics. A core focus of CITIES, for example, was collection of data related to threats to community cohesion (TTCC) in all partner municipalities. CITIES conducted numerous assessments
of TTCC in the 33 partner municipalities. The assessments identified numerous community threats, such as lack of public parks and playgrounds, conflicts of land boundaries, and illegal building. In addition to these, inequity in municipal service provision and youth unemployment and inactivity were noted as significant TTCC by municipal residents. These threats were then grouped in five categories (see chart). The CITIES TTCC approach could serve as a foundation for building a nationwide metric for safety and security, a key aspect of J2SR’s government capacity metric. While progress toward self-reliance can only be definitively measured numerically, the voices and experiences of citizens matter and can capture and convey critical content and nuance that numbers alone cannot. Programs like CITIES’s Townhall Meeting Methodology (THM) represent ideal laboratories for development, refinement, and scale-up of structures for hearing these voices. The “Guide to Conducting Municipal Town Hall Meetings” was used throughout the project’s target municipalities and even adapted to specific community concerns and communication approaches. In New Ma’adi, CITIES supported several town hall meetings that identified environment challenges as a community priority. The municipality led an environmental awareness campaign in Dhahret Al Ramel and Damia as part of a communications strategy to promote positive citizen engagement. This citizen outreach effort resulted in local community members, community-based organizations, government entities, and youth volunteers participating in street cleaning, painting, and tree pruning.

CITIES has been integral to helping Jordan improve its capacity and deepen its commitment to identifying and addressing its own municipal-level challenges contributing to increased self-reliance. Cast within the J2SR conceptual and measurement framework, these impacts occur primarily within the areas of open and accountable governance, inclusive development, capacity of the government, and capacity of civil society.
CITIES Support for Greater Capacity

As noted in the J2SR, capacity is the ability to manage development journeys across the dimensions of political, social, and economic development. CITIES has concentrated support for its 33 partner municipalities to strengthen their ability and overall capacity to assess and address their communities’ priorities.

Finance personnel and systems. In Greater Madaba municipality, CITIES has been instrumental in building critical capacities of finance personnel and systems. The project’s municipal financial review suggested recommendations to enhance internal controls, especially for solid waste collection fees. Such recommendations, if fully implemented, could result in a monetary benefit of more than 250,000 Jordanian Dinars ($350,000). “The training we received through the CITIES had a strategic vision; it gave us clear insight on how to manage the collection fees and restore lost revenue”, said Mohammad Abu Qaoud, director of the Local Development Unit at the Greater Madaba Municipality. Additionally, in Al-Hawawsheh, CITIES has been providing technical assistance on how to use more reliable automated data to evaluate municipal finances through improved analysis of revenues and costs. According to Ibrahim Al-Hawawsheh, head of the Revenues Section at the Greater Madaba Municipality, “CITIES’s training program allowed us to examine our financial system from a different perspective. It drew our attention toward improving our internal practices for collecting municipal revenues, as well as monitoring our obligations.” CITIES’s capacity building assistance has helped improve financial control, restore and grow municipal revenues, and will ultimately support Greater Madaba, Al-Hawawsheh, and other partner municipalities ensure effective realization of revenues and costs as municipalities work toward self-reliance.

Municipal service delivery. CITIES’s Addressing Jordan initiative supports more efficient municipal service delivery through street naming, numbering buildings, and providing formal addresses to households and businesses throughout Jordan. In partnership with Ministry of Local Administration (MOLA), this initiative is improving the efficiency and overall quality of municipal service delivery. CITIES has installed 170 street poles and 2,100 building numbers in Ajloun, 314 street poles and 1,778 building numbers in Jerash, and 265 street poles and more than 6,000 building numbers in
Mafraq. This initiative is a prerequisite to MOLA’s long-term vision of creating maps and implementing street naming and building numbering nationwide to ensure timely and accurate municipal service delivery and to support the expansion of e-governance in Jordan. As e-commerce takes hold, the impact of reliably identifying households throughout the country on economic growth and efficiency will be similarly important.

**CITIES Support for Greater Commitment**

To ensure that improved capacity is maintained, CITIES is also supporting efforts to deepen local government commitment to governing in a citizen-centered way. CITIES is also providing targeted assistance to social accountability actors to enhance their commitment to legally and peacefully holding government accountable to their mandate.

**Town hall meetings.** CITIES has strengthened the ability of partner municipalities to work together to understand and solve their own development challenges through broad adoption of THM. Whether focused on identifying service delivery priorities, addressing TTCC, or building community understanding of municipal budget challenges, THMs have become vital means of building shared commitment to democratic governance.

**Community cohesion and resilience.** In light of Jordan’s shifting demographics and continually strained resources, CITIES has prioritized working with municipalities to ensure more cohesive communities that are resilient to destabilization. Through its community cohesion intervention matrices, CITIES oriented its community cohesion activities around youth engagement and youth service providers in Al Dhulail and Greater Karak Municipality. Meetings with youth organizations and representatives uncovered youth-specific needs and grievances and resulted in the formation of a volunteer youth group under the umbrella of the Greater Karak Municipality. The volunteer group

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**Increased Commitment from CITIES**

**Open and Accountable Governance:**
- More transparent and regularly accessible governance systems through institutionalization of the Town Hall Meeting methodology
- Social media outreach to Syrian refugees and Jordanian youth
- Support to improved community-MLDU interaction through Municipal Outreach Units

**Inclusive Development:**
- Gender mainstreaming built into Local Development Planning (LDP) and embodied in LDP Manual
- Municipal Community Outreach Groups (MCOGs) established
- Gender Audit systems development and capacity building for municipalities
- Training for Governorates on Gender Equity and Social Inclusion

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**Leveraging Community Cohesion Initiatives**

CITIES worked with Al Khalidiyah municipality to identify the most pressing threats to community cohesion. One of the primary findings highlighted the significant amount of idle time for youth posed a range of potential challenges undermining community cohesion. In response, the municipality applied for and won an 80,000 JD ($110,000) grant from the World Bank to hire unemployed youth in building a stadium and adjoining sports facilities for young Jordanians to use, minimizing loitering and other threats to community cohesion.
organized a “No for Drugs; Yes for Life” event in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, as well as other community awareness-raising sessions on citizen values and municipality-communication channels. In Al Jafr, CITIES learned that women’s participation was the source of community tension, and so CITIES partnered with the MDLU to coordinate the Al Jafr Women Bazaar for handicrafts, products, and accessories to provide a positive, safe outlet for women’s participation in the community. These targeted interventions have equipped municipalities with the skills needed to identify and respond to factors affecting community cohesion while promoting the broader inclusion in the municipal governance of communities.

**Local planning.** CITIES’s Advisory Unit for Decentralization has supported implementation of an improved local development planning approach for Jordan's smallest municipalities. Through use of a simplified needs identification methodology, Al-Me’rad, Al-Naseem, Bab Amman, Burma, Theban, Lubb and Mlaih, Al-Sharah, and New Al-Husainiyah municipalities now use a streamlined methodology for identifying development needs — a critical capacity for open budget preparation and execution.

**Implications for Local Governance Programming**

As typified in CITIES’s support for greater local-level capacity and commitment to govern inclusively, local governance programming must incorporate multiple voices, institutionalize locally driven systems for responding to citizen needs, and empower social accountability actors to maintain productive oversight measures. CITIES has seen significant success in institutionalizing gender equity and social inclusion in local governance through holistic gender mainstreaming support to displaying the intrinsic value in more inclusive governing practices. Municipal staff buy-in is a critical prerequisite for leading gender equity initiatives from gender and social inclusion mainstreaming exercises to gender audit training. Additionally, prioritizing data helps ensure more responsive and inclusive governance. Through the development of MCOGs and other joint government-civil society groups, local officials are being held accountable and are building greater trust among their constituents. Supporting government-led proactive outreach initiatives has helped officials know how to govern and has shored up constituent trust that their officials are fulfilling their mandate as public servants. Inclusivity, data, and accountability are critical to building capacity and ensuring commitment for local governments as they move toward greater self-reliance.