

STRATEGIC PLANNING IN LEBANESE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

A CASE STUDY OF THE
MENIEH AND CENTRAL AND
COASTAL QAYTAA UNIONS OF
MUNICIPALITIES*

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACCD	Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation
ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
AMF	Autonomous Municipal Fund
ATI	Access to Information
CDR	Council for Development and Reconstruction
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
DRI	Democracy Reporting International
GIS	Geographic Information System
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGO	International Non-governmental organisation
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LED	Local Economic Development
MASAR	Maintaining Strength and Resilience Programme
MoIM	Ministry of Interior and Municipalities
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
UoM	Union of Municipalities
UGI	Urban Governance Index
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlement Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Executive Summary

Lebanon has witnessed a rapid urbanisation trend in the past decades that has resulted in large conurbations and an urban sprawl that has progressively taken over natural and agricultural lands, with a visible lack of primary services and infrastructure.

Local governments are overwhelmed by daily management tasks, such as maintenance of public buildings and roads, exacerbated by the influx of thousands of refugees from Syria and the financial distress caused by the ongoing financial crisis. As a result, local governments focus on short-term ad hoc projects and quick fixes that are likely to attract external donor funding instead of strategic, long-term actions. Most municipal officials view strategic development planning as a not a priority given the ongoing multiple crises.

Budget constraints not only curtail the capacity to provide services and infrastructure, but they also limit local governments' capacity to attract specialised technical expertise to plan/design, implement, and monitor them. This is further complicated by the prevailing political and economic instability, and the interference of influential politicians who hold sway in the area, who are motivated by clientelistic interests.

Based on a case study of two unions of municipalities (UoMs), the Coastal and Central Qaytaa UoM in Akkar and the Menieh UoM in North-Lebanon, the methodology for this

working document included data collection through a documentation review and consultations, following UN-Habitat Urban Government Index framework and focusing on four indicators: effectiveness, equity, participation, and accountability. This policy brief derives several lessons learnt to engage in strategic planning at the municipal level:

- Despite the availability of foreign-funded projects and the wealth of civil society initiatives, several factors, such as a lack of resources, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and political interference, are limiting the impact of municipal projects.
- Lebanese residents and refugees have, more or less, equal access to services, and they both suffer from poor service quality. Refugees are more vulnerable than nationals, but they also receive financial support from donors. Youth and women are both highly under-represented politically. Even though they are consulted and often invited to public discussions, they are not part of municipal decision making.
- The pandemic and the worsening financial situation were cited as the main drivers of low participation, reportedly justifying the cancellation of internal and public meetings and the impossibility to implement development projects. However, emergency situations can also create opportunities for increased information-sharing and participation, for instance through the creation of local committees. Low municipal finances can also be mitigated by resorting to

volunteering activities and public consultations to brainstorm on resourceful ways to withstand the deteriorating situation.

- Accountability levels are low, noting the pandemic created many opportunities for more intensive communication and information-sharing through affordable digital means. The lack of investment in this regard indicates low interest in, or awareness of, the importance of transparency as a factor of trust and cooperation between municipal officials and the local community.

To enable local governments to take the lead in the elaboration and implementation of strategic plans, a multi-pronged approach is suggested: (1) at the local/regional level, engaging in a multi-stakeholder policy discussion about strategic planning that is inclusive of the key policy actors and that openly discusses mitigations to institutional, political, and financial challenges; (2) at the central government level, fast-tracking policies that create an enabling environment for local governments (administrative decentralisation, boosting municipal finances, validating strategic plans); (3) donor organisations should act as conveners and facilitators of such processes, providing technical expertise and logistical assistance, and enabling cross-sectoral coordination.

There were, also, those who did not vote. Many media reports suggested that in some areas people were intimidated in order not to vote. Also, for example, some may have lacked trust in the alternative. The turnout was lower than the 2018 and 2009 elections (49.7% and 54%,

respectively), a result that contrasts with the enormity of the stakes associated with the current election. The drop in turnout was particularly marked in some regions, perhaps a correlation with the Hariri “boycott” and the fear to challenge Hezbollah’s supremacy. The Hasbaya-Marjeyoun district, where the opposition won two key seats, and Tripoli, witnessed a 10% decrease in turnout, Saida-Jezzine (South I) a 16% decrease, and the North II district a 33% decrease, all of which eventually served the opposition lists. The unprecedentedly high vote of the Lebanese diaspora was largely in favour of the anti-establishment factions, with 60% of the 130,000 out-of-country voters casting their vote for opposition lists.

New independent contenders captured two seats in the districts where Hezbollah and Amal had until now claimed hegemony, a significant achievement. The lukewarm Shiite participation (42%) – not to say the reluctance to vote – is largely the result of the shelving of a socio-economic and political reform agenda.

Hezbollah and the Amal Movement succeeded in retaining all 27 Shiite seats but, for the first time, failed to secure the re-election of key non-Shiite allies who ran on its ticket. Nevertheless, securing the parliamentary seats that are earmarked to the Shiite community gives leverage to the Shiite duo in its quest to re-elect the head of the Amal movement, Nabih Berri, to the Speakership, and thereby, to maintain the “institutional legitimacy” of Hezbollah’s weapons.

Introduction

Lebanese local governments have witnessed a rapid and uncontrolled urban sprawl in the past decades, caused by a massive rural exodus and internal displacement of populations during the 1975–1990 Civil War. The Syrian refugee crisis has further accelerated this trend since 2011, resulting in numerous informal tented settlements and highly unregulated urban areas.

Since the 1990s, long before the financial crisis that is unfolding since 2019, local governments have been struggling to provide basic services. Shortness in municipal funds and human resources, coupled with the lack of a strategic vision that prioritises medium-to-long-term development, have resulted in an obsolete infrastructure and failing services.

Urban governance is the sum of many ways in which individuals and institutions, public and private, plan and manage the everyday affairs of the city. Strategic planning is one of the tools to strengthen urban governance at local level and to mainstream development projects under unified principles guiding by a broad development vision. This explains the vital link between good governance norms and urban strategic planning. In other words, urban governance and planning practices are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

Strategic plans are participatory policy processes based on place, people, and the local economy. They include a long-term

vision for the area with integrated goals and project-oriented work plans. Typical desired outcomes include the promotion of local investments, job creation, service improvement, and poverty reduction.

Several territorial and urban strategic plans have been elaborated since 2008, with the support and technical assistance of international donor organisations. Several challenges have faced these initiatives in Lebanon, namely:

- Limited citizen participation in the elaboration of strategic plans due to the lack of trust between municipal officials and the local community.
- Municipal officials prioritise ad hoc, short-term projects that could potentially attract immediate donor funding. Strategic planning is a lengthy and time-consuming process and municipal officials rarely visualise how strategies translate into sustainable funding. This situation has been exacerbated by the rampant inflation. Since 2019, municipal budgets have lost 93% of their value and municipal officials have become even more focused on finding immediate answers to their daily problems. Local governments are constantly in “emergency mode”.
- Local political agendas often do not match the priorities and projects identified through strategic planning. Local politicians prefer to keep development projects under their umbrella to leverage them during the next elections.

- Many strategic plans are elaborated by experts who lack context understanding, which negatively impacts the ownership of the project at a later stage.

Methodology

Within the framework of the MASAR programme¹ for Local Governments, local governance assessments² were conducted in several areas of intervention. This paper focuses on demonstration projects undertaken by the Catalan Agency for Cooperation and Development (ACCD), a MASAR consortium member, in the Coastal and Central Qaytaa UoM (Akkar) and the Menieh UoM (North-Lebanon).

Central and Coastal Qaytaa Union of Municipalities

- Constituted of 14 municipalities.
- ACCD figures, cross-checked with available data, the population of the area is around 140,000 people, including some 35,000 Palestinian from Nahr El-Bared camp.
- The coastal area is bounded by agricultural land and businesses, especially on the sides of the highway.

Menieh Union of Municipalities

- Constituted of 5 municipalities.
- Menieh Union occupies a strategic geographical position on the highway of Tripoli-Akkar, the Arab international highway leading to Syria in the north and the main entry to the region of Danniye. The union's villages are mainly located on the coastal zone where agricultural activities, commerce on the Arab International Highway, light industry – especially carpentry – in addition to real estate represent pillars for economic growth.
- The area hosts around 110,000 residents in addition to 42,000 Syrian refugees, of which around 22,502 are registered according to UNHCR factsheets published in February 2019.

¹ Maintaining Strength and Resilience for Local Governments in Iraq and Lebanon, from 18 December 2018 until 18 December 2022, funded by the European Commission.

² Based on a template questionnaire that addressed mainly the need of the two Unions to have a Strategic Plan framing their interventions as well as their capacity to elaborate one.

The study was based on the methodology suggested by UN-Habitat's Global Campaign⁴, which focused on four main pillars of the Urban Governance Index (UGI): effectiveness, equity, participation, and accountability.

Data was collected through a desk review of existing studies and reports on the one hand and through consultation meetings with the concerned heads of UoM, during which a questionnaire was filled to evaluate and rank the performance of the selected indices. The evaluation was aligned with UN-Habitat's UGI framework⁵.

The data was then evaluated in light of four factors: a) ease of collection; b) universality; c) relevance; and d) credibility. Following this evaluation, the indicators were ranked as "high", "moderate", and "low". The average score of sub-indices was ranked as "good", "fair", or "weak".

The results were analysed according to the same conceptual framework. This led to the suggestion of a set of recommendations to be addressed at both national and international levels.

³ The campaign introduces the UGI as an advocacy and capacity-building tool to assist cities and countries in monitoring the quality of urban governance through defining seven core principles: sustainability, subsidiarity, equity, efficiency, transparency and accountability, civic engagement and citizenship, and security, that can be implemented through a set of indicators to be measured that respond directly to the local context and needs.

⁴ This methodology was based on four factors related to the ease of collection, universality, relevance, and credibility of each indicator. Afterwards, each indicator was allocated a score ranging from 0 to 100 points, thus, indicating the ranking as "high", "moderate", or "low" indicator performance. This process allowed to calculate an average score for the four pillars and therefore determined whether the representation of sub-indices was "good", "fair", or "weak".

Overview of Case Studies

This section includes a summary of the questionnaire results following the meetings conducted with the heads of the Central and Coastal Qaytaa UoM and the Menieh UoM.

Case Study 1: Central and Coastal Qaytaa Union of Municipalities

Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The union manages solid waste collection in addition to maintenance works of both primary and secondary roads due to the absence of involvement on the part of the line ministry. Electricity, water, and health services are de facto the responsibility of the municipalities. • There are many active local and international NGOs in the area. The UoM does not receive direct financial support from them but rather benefits from the implementation of many small and medium scale projects. • The UoM carried out a wide range of activities in support of the local community, including training courses for women, sports, cultural, and other social gatherings. Most activities stopped in the wake of the 2020 pandemic. • Development projects that threaten patronage networks are often put to a halt. • Main challenge for the UoM is the scarcity of financial resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The UoM's expenses on basic services (like waste collection) exceeds its revenues, which resulted in the downscaling of operations and a poorer service. The central government's delay in transferring the local governments' share of the Autonomous Municipal Fund (AMF), hinders local governments' financial planning ability. The amounts received were subject to the inflation, thereby undermining service provision. ◦ The high unemployment rate (around 50%) is correlated with the low tax collection rate. Fiscal revenues are not enough to sustain any significant development work. Instead, basic maintenance works are conducted. ◦ The union currently has only four employees who are paid as daily workers. Financial difficulties to secure salaries and thus the inability to attract expertise.
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Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees and residents benefit from the same public services. Poor service quality affects refugees and residents alike. • Refugees are more vulnerable, but they also receive more support and financial aid. The local population is also affected by precarity. • According to a UoM head, municipalities should be able to collect taxes from Syrian refugees in exchange for the services provided, especially since they receive monthly financial aid in US dollars.
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal committees became inactive and townhall meetings have been suspended since the pandemic. Some informal municipal committees convened periodically but did not lead to tangible results. • Low participation of women in municipal activities. Women are not represented in the elected councils. • The turnout exceeded 40% in the 2018 parliamentary election, and 48% in the 2016 municipal election, which was lower than the national average of 49%.
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UoM communicates with citizens mostly informally through social media (WhatsApp and Facebook pages). • There are no websites or platforms to receive official information as per the provisions of the Access to Information (ATI) law. • Communication is mostly promotional, informal/verbal, and centred around the person of the mayors.

Strategic Planning

- The union lacks resources to engage in strategic planning. The priority is directed toward finding solutions for immediate problems (i.e., the waste crisis), securing salaries for employees, remunerating experts, conducting basic maintenance and operations.
- Despite these constraints, the union is trying to work on a Local Economic Development (LED) strategy.
- Preliminary vision for a strategic plan for the area:
 - Establishing hospitals, dispensaries, and healthcare clinics, all of which are lacking in the region. Emergency clinics do operate in the area, with the support of donor organisations. However, this is not sustainable.
 - Establishing a branch of the Lebanese University (public university).
 - Strengthening the vocational education sector, employment opportunities, small and medium enterprises, artisans, etc.
 - Supporting the agriculture sector and the food industry.
 - Public transportation for students and professionals who bear high expenses to commute from Akkar to the south of Tripoli.
 - Cost recovery for solid waste management, activating the waste sorting plant established by the European Union (at a cost of 10 million US dollars).
 - Renewable energy projects.

Case Study 2: Menieh Union of Municipalities

Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The union has good relationships with local and international NGOs. The UoM does not receive financial support from donor agencies but instead benefits from implementing many small and medium projects. • The UoM has an annual budget of 500 million LBP and 240 million LBP⁵ from MoIM's AMF. The last MoIM transfer was made in 2019. • The union is taking up tasks that are beyond its legal mandate, such as conducting maintenance works for the governorate administration (a deconcentrated authority), e.g., provision of diesel/fuel for the electric generator, carrying out sewage maintenance. • Political instability at the national level is severely impacting the union's capacity to carry out needed development projects. • Several development projects were suspended due to the political interference because they threatened clientelist networks. • The union has limited policy-making power because of the multiple layers of approvals required from the central and deconcentrated governments (MoIM, governor, district commissioner, line ministries) to carry out any work. This contradicts the principle of autonomy stipulated in the law. • In the absence of significant income, the union does not expect improvement of service delivery in the short run. Members are only hoping to secure the sustainability of maintenance works especially in the waste collection sector and to pay employees' salaries. • The union has 15 employees, who are paid as daily workers. Budget constraints do not allow to hire expertise. There is only one civil engineer working in the newly created GIS technical unit established by MASAR.
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees and residents benefit from the same public services provided by the UoM. Poor service quality affects both groups equally. • Lack of women participation in municipal work. Women are not represented in elected councils.
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the pandemic, an Emergency Committee was formed, consisting of associations, activists, and member municipalities, for internal coordination and to liaise with healthcare professionals. • The union has good outreach to volunteers, who were mobilised for several surveys (see strategic planning section). • The turnout exceeded 55% in the 2018 parliamentary election and the 51% in the 2016 municipal election (higher than the national average of 49%).

⁵ Around 30,000 USD and 16,000 USD as per the exchange rate at the time of writing.

Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal budgets are published on the union's website: www.mymenieh.com, but compliance with ATI is partial. The absence of any new tenders and contracts is due to the ongoing crisis. • The union used to organise open public meetings and debates at least once a year. These meetings stopped during the pandemic.
Strategic Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) projects to expand and modernise the water and wastewater networks, there is not strategy being elaborated in this sector, as it falls under the mandate of the central government. The UoM has not been delegated authority to elaborate strategies in this regard. • The area is famous for the carpentry sector, especially the manufacture of furniture, and there are many workshops in the area. The union wishes to develop this sector. This can secure employment for locals and Syrian refugees alike. • The union currently relies on volunteers to collect basic information about the number of residential and non-residential units (factories, businesses) located within its geographical scope. • According to the head of the Menieh UoM, the strategic plan for the area should focus on quick solutions to develop the region in the short term. ACCD and Menieh worked on a strategic document identifying projects for the short- and mid-term, answering to this request.

Key Findings

The **effectiveness** indicator seemed to be the highest in view of the availability of foreign-funded projects and the wealth of civil society initiatives in the area (infrastructure, service improvement, etc.). However, several factors limit the impact of this work, such as budget constraints, difficulty to attract expertise, and political interference.

Weak **equity** indicator. Even though citizens and refugees suffer, more or less equally, from poor service quality, there was little mention of the role of youth and women. Both groups are highly under-represented politically. Youth and women are consulted and often invited to public discussions, but they do not seem to be part of decision making.

The **participation** indicator was the weakest. The pandemic and the worsening financial situation were cited as the main drivers of

low participation, reportedly justifying the cancellation of internal and public meetings and the impossibility of implementing development projects. However, emergency situations can also create opportunities for increased information-sharing and participation, for instance through the creation of Emergency Response Committees and awareness campaigns. Low municipal finances can also be mitigated by resorting to volunteering activities and public consultations to brainstorm on resourceful ways to withstand the current economic situation.

Similarly, the **accountability** indicator scored quite low, noting that both UoMs did not support citizen committees and open debates organised by ACCD as part of the strategic planning process? Instead, they preferred expert-driven analysis and proposals. Public meetings would have boosted transparency between local authorities and citizens and thus increased trust. In addition, the pandemic also created opportunities for more intensive communication and information-sharing through affordable digital means. The lack of investment in this regard indicates low interest in, or awareness of, the importance of transparency as a factor of trust and cooperation between municipal officials and the local community.

Recommendations

The evaluation of the two case studies shows the importance of elaborating strategic plans with clear priorities to address the urban development and land use challenges.

Suggested policies and recommendations shall include the following actions to limit the challenges facing strategic planning, in line with ACCD's efforts in the region:

- Increase the level of participation through engaging local stakeholders in the elaboration of strategic plan, e.g., through the creation of municipal committees⁶;
- Stress the importance of strategic planning and focus on priority actions that could have a major leverage effect on the economy of the region;
- Limit political interferences in strategic planning and development projects;
- Ensure that local authorities are responsible for the initiation, implementation, and monitoring of the plan.

The successful implementation of the above requires efforts' coordination between different concerned stakeholders. Considering the diversity of actors involved in the strategic planning process, the following recommendations flow from the analysis of the main challenges encountered by the unions:

⁶ Despite ACCD's multiple proposals in this regard, which included suggested names and detailed terms of references for the committee members, the move was met with resistance.

Recommendations for municipal officials:

- Consider the Strategic Plan as a tool to elaborate a shared vision for the development of the area. This tool will allow them to mainstream local initiatives as well as projects funded by international organisations towards the same goal and objectives.
- Secure needed human and technical resources for the elaboration of the strategic plan. This may include the following actions, following the footsteps of the process initiated by MASAR:
 - Make use of the existing GIS technical unit created by MASAR in both areas
 - Identify the quality of the required data and build the related database
 - Collect and analyse data
 - Provide capacity building trainings for municipal staffs
 - Identify potential stakeholders and partner, and conduct participatory sessions
- Support the GIS unit created by MASAR in both areas through increasing its allocated budget to secure salaries, procure equipment, and train GIS officers⁷. As GIS contributes towards bring up to date the territorial planning approach and is an essential tool in the elaboration of the Strategic Plan at the local level. Prior to the introduction of GIS in both considered unions, urban development works relied mostly on outdated tools and approaches. This negatively impacted the quality, accuracy and coverage of municipal services in light of a rapidly growing population.
- Boost citizen participation in decision making by involving local stakeholders, NGOs, and private sector entities in all phases of strategic planning through their integration into thematic committees that should include as well local experts Intensify in parallel public meetings and consultations. This will enable trust building and co-creation between the various stakeholders. This entails sustained efforts to carefully navigate municipal politics, balance different interests, and identify suitable entry points for citizen participation.
- Involve donor organisations in the facilitation of dialogue processes, and discuss strategic needs to match, as much as possible, between local priorities and donor agendas.
- Strengthen main economic sectors in both areas by prioritizing job creating projects, e.g., elaborating an agricultural vision linked to a well-studied marketing strategy.
- Mainstream ATI in municipal institutions to increase trust.
- Reach out to influential members of the Lebanese diaspora to invest in their hometowns, or to consider donating for the union through organizing public events, and continuous communications on social media.
- Consider the Strategic Plan as a “living document” that should be flexible enough to adapt to ongoing challenges and be ready to update it accordingly.

⁷ MASAR provided the GIS units with the necessary equipment as well as weekly training and mentoring for more than a year. In addition, MASAR covered salaries for Qaytaa while Menieh committed to cover salaries where the financial resources were available.

Recommendations for national government officials:

- Facilitate the review and approval process of the strategic plans developed by local governments.
- Resume the work on the Administrative Decentralisation bill, launched in 2014. The draft law defines the scale of intervention of strategic plans that must be carried out at the level of districts. The adoption of the law will enhance integrated strategic planning. In parallel, the existence of strategic plan will reinforce effective decentralization at the level of both considered unions⁸.
- Revisit the structure of the AMF, as suggested in the 2014 Decentralisation bill, ensuring that the criteria for calculating and distributing equalisation payments are fair and transparent⁹.
- Amend the Municipal Law to allow local governments to borrow money from development finance institutions, while ensuring an institutional bulwark/guarantee to ensure debt repayment.
- Update the 2009 National Physical Master plan for the Lebanese territory. The urban sprawl has affected most of Lebanon, with a major impact on agricultural land. New urban regulations should regulate land use, also in accordance with regional plans.

- Coordinate and integrate planning efforts across sectors into one planning approach, defining a unified vision of the territory's land use. This could be done through the reintroduction of the Ministry of Planning.
- Implement a central coordination platform that uses a unified information management system and access point for land use planning having direct impact on the sustainability of natural resources. This will ensure internal coordination between central authorities and enhance cooperation between central and local administrations.

Recommendations for donor organisations:

- Act as conveners and facilitators of inclusive, multi-stakeholder processes related to strategic planning and mitigation measures against threats/challenges (i.e., political interference). Provide technical expertise and logistical assistance to ensure their success.
- Support policy design actions related to the Administrative Decentralisation Bill, the restructuring of the AMF, and the revision of the municipal finances.
- Support a national policy process on integrated strategic planning, linking up local, regional, and country-wide planning across sectors – also with regards to updating the 2009 National Physical Master plan for the Lebanese territory.

⁸ "Why Lebanon Needs Integrated Territorial Approaches to Development?" LCPS. 2020: *Approaching territorial development in Lebanon is apt to redefine the notions of decentralization and local autonomy*. Mona Khechen.

⁹ See DRI. (2020). *Restructuring Subnational Governance in Lebanon: Towards Efficient Public Spending and Reduced Regional Inequalities*. November 2020.

- Discuss the importance of strategic planning with municipal officials to understand their apprehensions and the reasons for not engaging in long-term planning as immediate response plans and emergency actions do not necessarily contradict mid- and longer-term planning. These dialogues should also discuss political interference in development projects and planning and explore ways to curtail/mitigate it.
- Promote the “Thinking Small and Flexible” approach by encouraging local governments to develop a three-year strategy that includes small-scale interventions. The Strategic Planning elaboration and implementation process should be based on an Agile planning approach¹⁰ that leaves room for requirement changes throughout and encourages constant feedback from concerned stakeholders.
- Include in the Agile Plan process, the development of a management crisis/ Immediate Response Plan in addition to the medium and long-term projects. This IRP aims at enhancing the livelihoods and wellbeing of the inhabitants. It strengthens their resilience to shocks and stresses in the short term.
- Reinforce local governments’ managerial capacities through capacity building to plan, implement, and manage projects. This should include training on how to conduct a needs assessment, project design, and proposal writing.
- Develop the work of the GIS Technical Unit/Local Office (created by MASAR), responsible for data collection, elaboration of base maps and data analysis. Guide its tasks to support the development of the strategic plan.
- Explore the possibilities to engage in Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) as per Law No. 48/2017¹¹, allowing local governments to mobilise funds from the private sector in the objective of funding services and infrastructure projects as well as contributing to the decentralisation¹². As the PPP law is suited for medium and large local governments, not for small unions, one could consider the funding of such projects into larger areas that could include Menieh and Central and Coastal Qaytaa regions along to other neighbouring municipalities.
- Support Emergency and Contingency Planning in addition to medium- and long-term planning.
- Organise capacity-building trainings for the two unions of Municipalities on several topics such as identifying priority projects, writing up projects’ fiches¹³ to international donors for potential project funding, and monitoring implementation of development projects.

¹⁰ The Agile planning approach is a way to manage a project by breaking it up into several phases. It involves constant collaboration with stakeholders and continuous improvement at every stage. Once the work begins, teams’ cycle through a process of planning, executing, and evaluating. Continuous collaboration is vital, both with team members and project stakeholders.

¹¹ The PPP Law was enacted with the main objective of promoting and encouraging investment in the infrastructure sector mainly at the national level

¹² Judge Abdullah Ahmad, Director General, Ministry of Social Affairs, 17 August 2022, declared the following: “Local socioeconomic development can be fostered when local communities, civil society, and the private and public sector work together. This synergy and collaboration would lead to innovative solutions that can alleviate challenges faced by communities.... I urge local authorities and all stakeholders to design project proposals that have the capability of improving people’s lives,”

¹³ The project fiche is a tool that supports the action planning process, detailing each project briefly. It contributes to formulate project objectives, identify project activities, and expected results; estimate costs of project components; determine institutional arrangements necessary for the implementation, and suggest tools for monitoring and evaluation of the project.

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