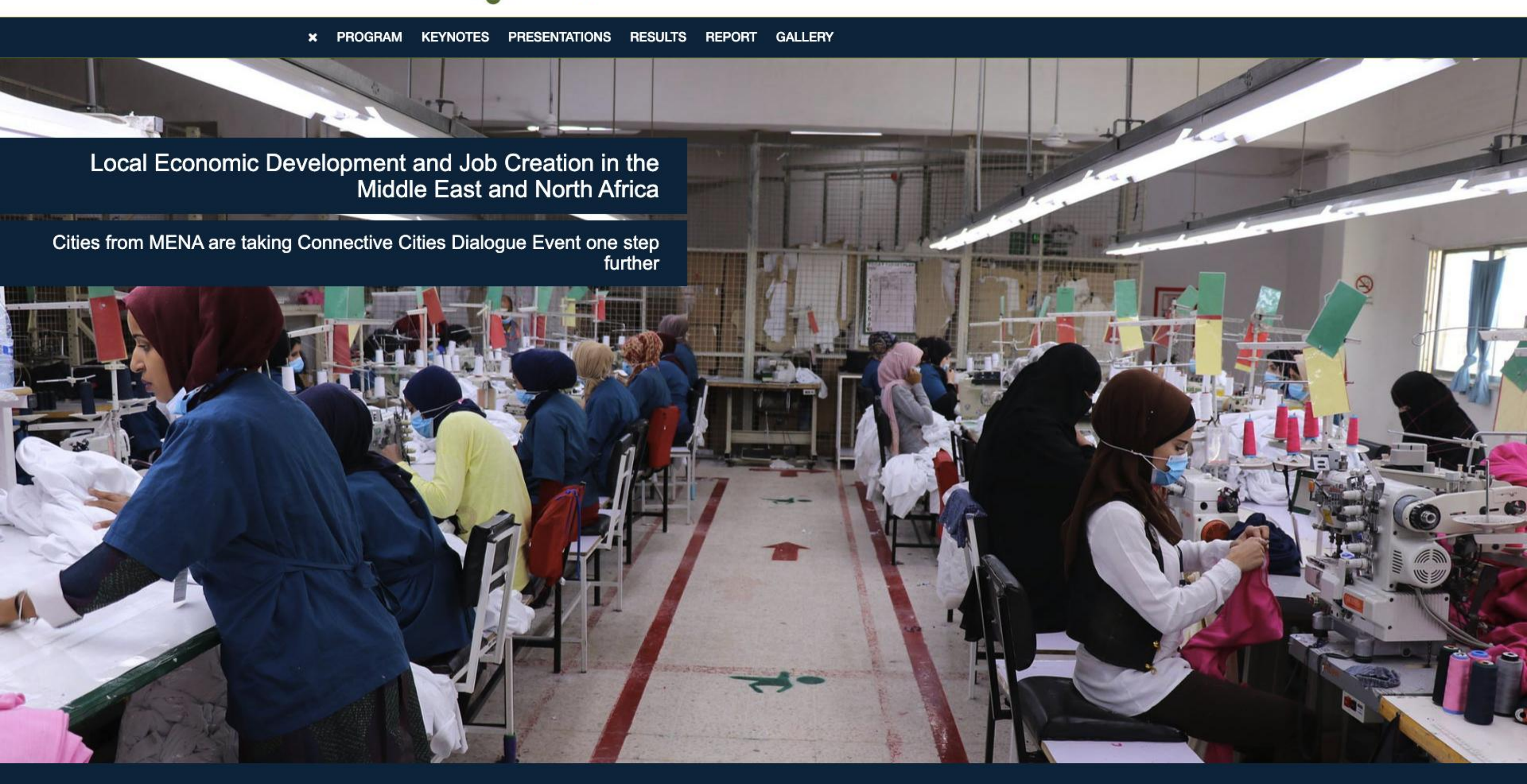
Local Economic Development and Job Creation in the Middle East and North Africa

Cities from MENA are taking Connective Cities Dialogue Event one step further



Overview

More than 40 local urban practitioners from 22 municipalities and 10 countries from the MENA region and Germany took part of the virtual dialogue event organized by the Connective Cities project. The dialogue event consisted of five virtual sessions held between the Sep 29th – Oct 7th focusing on facilitating the exchange of know-how and experiences through peer-to-peer learning among municipal representatives and urban practitioners. Moreover, the dialogue event aimed at enriching the analysis and planning capacity of the participating municipal representatives to address existing challenges of implementing LED and job creation programs. The discussion also led to identifying the gaps in resources and the support needed to implement future LED projects.

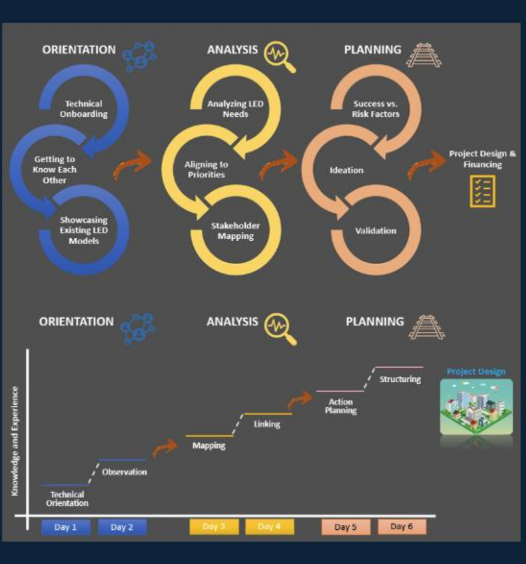
Local economic development (LED) remains a top priority for cities in MENA and a driver for economic stability and job creation for a region with one of the highest unemployment rates in the world. A wide spectrum of stakeholders are engaged in fostering LED including governments, NGOs, the private sector, and development actors. Nevertheless, there remains the need to intensify exchange of practice-oriented experience and good practice among municipal representatives and urban practitioners on related topics such as strategizing for LED and creating partnerships with the private sector, sustainable livelihood programs and decent job creation, as well as green economic transformation.

The facilitation approach focused on designing, planning, and conducting a series of virtual knowledge-exchange activities in which several steps were taken:

1. *Clustering*: of partners according to their regional distribution, municipal needs, and vision for future development for their cities;
2. *Defining*: the subtopics for dialogue that are in harmony with their current ambitions and future objectives;
3. *Inviting*: partners to virtual dialogue sessions after outlining the goal of this dialogue and defining roles and responsibilities agreed upon by all partners, as well as the anticipated outcome;
4. *Facilitating*: the virtual exchange sessions in a manner that will ensure maximum interaction and knowledge exchange;
5. *Evaluation and Follow up*: with all partners after all sessions are completed to share the outputs of the dialogue to maintain ongoing knowledge exchange for future collaboration in between the different municipalities;
6. *Reporting*: on all conducted activities and the overall summary of the dialogue.

The project has built a Network, an exchange platform for municipal representatives and urban practitioners, which provides a systematic access to practice-oriented solutions for sustainable urban development by facilitating change and providing mutual support.

Dialogue event introductory video: English version | Arabic version



Program

From a thematic standpoint, the Connective Cities virtual dialogue event has focused on the following subtopics:

1. ***Strategic planning for LED***: guiding a participatory LED process that encourages partnership arrangements with representatives from all sectors; mobilizing strategic partnerships with the private sector and investors to access alternative financing mechanisms; enabling the joint design and implementation of a common development strategy; using local resources and competitive advantages to create a resilient and sustainable locality with decent jobs and stimulating economic activity.
2. ***Promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities and social enterprise***: implementing livelihood programs to enhance entrepreneurship skills and support the establishment of microbusinesses; contributing to social cohesiveness and conflict prevention through decent job creation for local communities; ensuring gender equality in economic participation.
3. ***Job creation through public investments in green infrastructure and circular economies***: developing inclusive employment and decent jobs as well as creating revenue systems for localities through the development of green infrastructure and circular economies.

Against this background, the virtual dialogue event was clustered according to the aforementioned thematic priorities that represent the thematic subtopics. This entails facilitating exchange of practical know-how and peer-to-peer consultations among participants in accordance to these subtopics.

Keynotes

- **Keynote Speech 1:**

Mr. Mohamed Saadieh - President of Union of Dannieh Municipalities, President of UCLG-MEWA

Arabic Version | English Version

- **Keynote speech 2:**

Ms. Giulia Marchesini- Senior partnership officer, Centre for Mediterranean Integration

Arabic Version | English Version

- **Expert insight 1: Insights by German experts**

Mr. Alexander Schmidbauer- Entrepreneurship/Startup Consultant -Munich Business Start-up Office (MEB)

Arabic Version | English Version

- **Expert insight 2: The role of economic policies in local development**

Ms. Dana AlZoubi - Advisor to Minister of MITS- Director of Economic Policy, Jordan

Arabic Version | English Version

- **Expert Insight 3: Cities as hubs for Investment**

Dr. Fred Boustany, CEO of Toyota in Lebanon

Arabic Version

Ms. Hanane Haber, Hazmieh municipality

Arabic Version

- **Expert Insight 4: Financing for LED**

Mr. Lance Morrell, Founder and Managing Director of FEI Consulting, LLC

Arabic Version | English Version

Mr. Mohammad Zawahreh, Former CEO of Zarqa municipality

Arabic Version | English Version

Presentations

Strategic planning for LED

Group 1: The rehabilitation of the old town of As-Samou' municipality (Hosh As-Safi)
Working group: Union of Dannieh Municipalities, Lebanon/ As-samou' municipality, Palestine/ Balama municipality, Jordan

Group 3: Sfax Business Centre
Working group: Ramallah municipality, Palestine/ Sfax municipality, Tunis

Promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities and social enterprise

Group 4: Cash-for-work, Baghdad, Iraq
Working group: Baghdad municipality, Iraq/ Alexandria governorate, Egypt (represented by GIZ EG)/ Gaza municipality, Palestine

Group 5: Home-based enterprises in the food processing industry in Qalqilya
Working group: Qalqilya municipality, Palestine/ Ajja municipality, Palestine/ Al Junied municipality, Jordan

Group 6: Center for Training and Development for women and with special needs, Hay Al-Andalus Municipality
Working group: Hay Al Andalus municipality, Libya/ Irbid municipality, Jordan/ Zliten municipality, Libya

Job creation through public investments in green infrastructure and circular economies

Group 7: Improving the environmental and economic sustainability of olive oil Industry in Palestine (EN-SOIP project)
Working group: Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany/ Batna municipality, Algeria/ Great Absan municipality, Palestine

Group 8: Bethlehem Waste Sorting and Treatment Station
Working group: Mafraq municipality, Jordan/ Agadir municipality, Morocco/ Bethlehem municipality, Palestine.

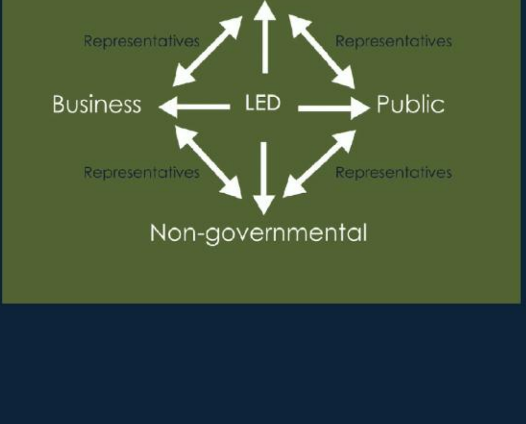
Results

The virtual dialogue event has proven that municipalities are keen to learn from existing practices and knowledge in the region. Working in groups, participants exchanged ideas, worked collaboratively, and developed project ideas addressing local needs and opportunities in their cities. Participants have engaged in many activities to design, analyse and develop LED interventions customized for their cities, taking into account: the local and national priorities, the municipalities own resources that can be invested in promoting LED projects, as well as the competitive advantage of their localities to attract investments.

Throughout the dialogue event, participants showed tremendous commitment to the program and dedication that remained high till the end of the final session, in which they presented their LED project ideas in less than 3 minutes; an activity that reflected their understanding of project development process as well as the methodology of the peer-to-peer advisory.

Here is the link to the recording of the presented project ideas:

English | Arabic



Report

Detailed documentation [pdf]:

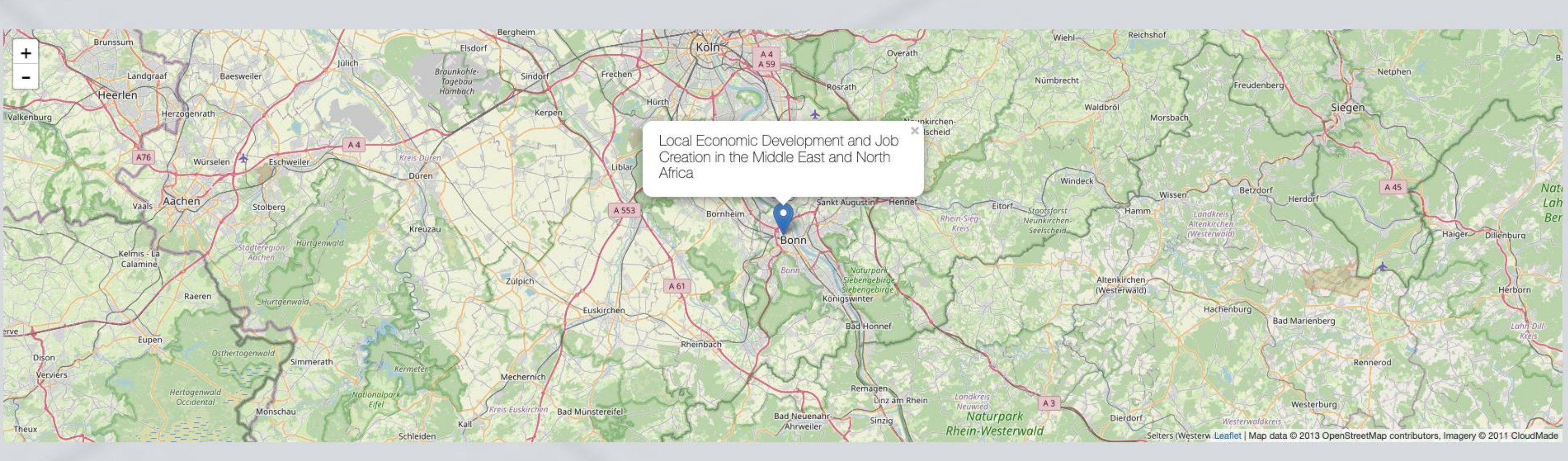
Local Economic Development and Job Creation in MENA

Connective Cities Dialogue Event from 29th September to 7th of October 2020

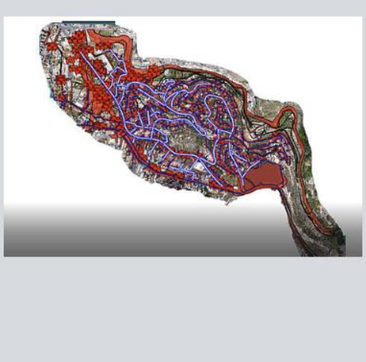
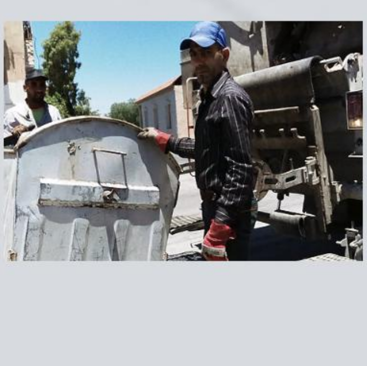
Categories: Local economic development | Start-up promotion | Green Urban Economy | Fostering innovation | SME promotion

Regions: Middle East

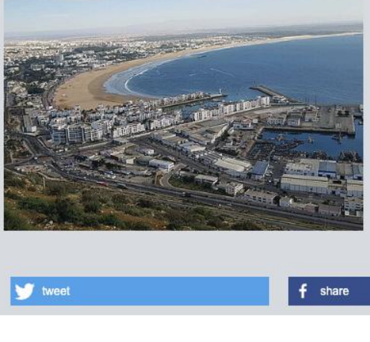
Location

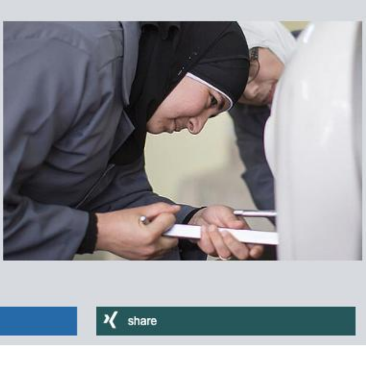


Related events

Related Good Practices





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