



THE WORLD BANK & THE ARAB URBAN DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE: A DECADE LONG PARTNERSHIP ON URBAN AND YOUTH ISSUES

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Introduction: Founded in 1980, with permanent headquarters in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI)² is a regional, non-governmental, non-profit urban research, technical and consulting organization. AUDI is also the technical and scientific arm of the Arab Towns Organization (ATO) – the regional UN Habitat affiliate – with an active membership of more than 400 Arab cities and towns representing 22 Arab states.

How long have you worked with the World Bank and in what areas?

AUDI's collaboration with the Bank stemmed from AUDI's technical support to the World Bank team that worked on the privatization of municipal services as part of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's privatization program for vital economic sectors in 2002.

Since 2002, World Bank-AUDI partnership has taken on several different forms. In 2003, AUDI received a Development Grant Facility grant from the Bank to establish the MENA Child Protection Initiative (CPI)³ – a key factor enabling the program to move forward⁴. In

¹ *Ahmed Al-Salloum*, Director General, AUDI; *Dr. Ibrahim Al-Turki*, Executive Director, MENA CPI, were interviewed by Aliya Jalloh from the MNA K&L team.

² For more see <http://www.araburban.org/AUDI/English>

³ For more see <http://www.menacpi.org>

⁴ The DGF establishes grant-making as an integral part of the Bank's development work and an important complement to its lending and advisory services. It sets out the overall Bank strategy of using grants to a) encourage innovation, b) catalyze partnerships, and c) broaden the scope of Bank services. In addition, all grants must meet sector and institutional priorities, be of high quality, and conform to eight DGF eligibility criteria. For more simply go to www.worldbank.org and type DGF in the search bar.

2005, AUDI partnered with Cities Alliances (financed through the Bank's Development Grant Facility) to help MENA towns and cities develop City Development Strategies (CDS). AUDI is also involved in different sectors such as urban planning and human development. Note should also be made in regards to a key difference between AUDI and other NGOs whereby AUDI views itself as a partner with the organizations it works with: when implementing a project, AUDI matches the monetary resources that it receives from the various organizations that it works with.

MENA CPI is a significant initiative within the region. What makes this initiative so important for the region?

MENA CPI was established in response to a recommendation made at the December 2002 "Children and the City" Amman conference to build the capacities of municipal authorities, and to establish a regional fund that would quickly respond to the risks faced by vulnerable and disadvantaged children and youth in the region. The rationale for the MENA CPI are as follows: (i) attaining the Millennium Development Goals in the region requires reaching out to vulnerable and disadvantaged children and youth; (ii) due to the speed of decentralization in the region, local governments and municipalities are closer to the source and solutions of these problems; and (iii) MENA countries have an extremely young age structure (43% of the total population in 2003 were under age 18, a percentage that is expected to keep increasing).

AUDI's convening power at the sub-sovereign level through its proximity to the mayors, municipalities, and local authorities have

facilitated partnerships that are generally difficult for the Bank to initiate and helped in targeting difficult-to-reach groups. Indeed, AUDI's partnership with the Bank is beneficial for both organizations on several fronts, not the least of which is the fact that AUDI gains significant technical knowledge from the Bank through this partnership, while the Bank benefits from AUDI's local knowledge.

The CPI has also had a significant impact on the outlook of the mayors who now view children and youth issues as central matters to be addressed by their municipalities. They now view this initiative as a key to addressing a volatile environment evolving in urban slums where children and youth (particularly those new rural immigrants) are often exposed to drugs, violence, labor exploitation, and environmental health hazards.

In collaboration with UNFPA, AGFUND, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, and the Islamic Development Bank, AUDI is implementing a project on Alleviation of Urban Poverty in several Arab cities (2005-2011). MENA CPI in partnership with Al Waleed Bin Talal Foundation is working on a new project for reintegration of school drop-outs in three cities: Sana'a (Yemen) and Karari & East Nile (Sudan).

A social safety network is being established in partnership between MENA CPI, the World Bank, three municipalities in North Lebanon and other stakeholders. The main objective of the network is to provide safety net for at risk (marginalized and vulnerable) children and youth in urban settlements deprived of basic socio-economic services. So far, this safety net consists of about 50 institutions that could assist these children and youth in reverting them to development path. Other cities in Lebanon and Syria have requested the assistance of MENA CPI to establish a social safety network in their respective cities.

AUDI has been instrumental in fostering new partnerships for the Bank in areas such as the urban observatories and City Development Strategies - can you expand on the work that AUDI has done in these areas?

As previously mentioned, AUDI began working with the Bank in 2002 on the

privatization of municipal services in Saudi Arabia. This was later expanded to secondary cities in Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Bahrain.

AUDI's work in various sectors has also evolved throughout the years, along with its partnership with the Bank: while AUDI's overall mission broadly remains urban and city development, it has also increased its efforts to address the issue of children and youth within MENA cities. Of particular note is the fact that other organizations in the region have now begun cooperating with the MENA CPI by funding some of its activities. These organizations include the Islamic Development Bank, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), the Arab Gulf Program for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND), and the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), among others.

The MENA CPI uses the Child Friendly City (CFC) of Amman as a model for other MENA countries. What makes the Amman CFC a good model and will the other MENA countries be able to scale up this model in their own cities?

The way AUDI is structured makes it easier to work on development issues that are not usually possible at the local level. Convincing city authorities to work on children and youth issues is not easy. They do not consider them as their job. But, since the mayors of the Arab cities are members of the board of directors of AUDI, The Mayor of Amman is an elected member of AUDI's board of directors. So through him, and in cooperation with regional partners like (AGFUND), the concept of Child Friendly City was introduced and implemented in Amman. However, it is worth noting that a city cannot be categorized as either an entirely child friendly city or as one that completely neglects the children and youth in its city; it's a spectrum, some cities are simply more child friendly than others, and due to this reason Amman has become a more child friendly city than others.

An ideal Child Friendly City is defined as one where the following three actors are united as equal partners and where their views are fully taken into account: "(i) producers (i.e. governments, private sector, NGOs and

CBOs); (ii) regulators (i.e. parents, guardians and care givers); and (iii) users (i.e. children, youth and community).⁵ A CFC is a city fully committed to the fulfillment of children's and youth's rights. It is a city where their voices, needs, priorities and rights are an integral part of the government's policies, programs and decisions. Indeed, key to establishing any CFC is a strong commitment to respecting the views of the children and youth and involving them in decisions affecting their lives; their participation is key to building cities and communities friendly to children. Youth is the crux of development in the Arab World.

The city of Amman has been committed to becoming a more child-friendly city for a long time; in fact, Amman was the first Arab municipal council to adopt the CFC Initiative. An expert committee was formed in Amman to guide the municipal government in developing a vision for a child-friendly city and to implement an ambitious citywide initiative. Since 2005, activities to improve Amman's status as a CFC have intensified, thematic priority areas have been identified, and measurable objectives have been set. The strategy also envisioned a number of features such as a child-friendly bylaw and a child-friendly budget. The child friendly budget aims to establish a legal mechanism in the municipal structure to ensure that the current priority granted to children be maintained in the future, while the bylaw would ensure that the municipality earmark regular resources for implementing annual child-friendly work plans.⁶ Additional activities include the transformation of parks into learning centers for children with libraries and computers, and the creation of a parliament of children elected by children that regularly meets with the city council and mayor, and whose voices are very much taken into account. As a result of these activities and programs, Amman has become a leader in the region, creating a model that is worth observing as it develops in the future.

⁵ Consultative Workshop on Child-Friendly Cities in the MENA region- Workshop Report.
http://www.menacpi.org/employee/menacpi/uploadfiles/Amman_WS_Report.pdf

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In regards to whether other MENA countries will be able to scale up the Amman CFC model in their own cities, of note is the fact that the MENA CPI in partnership with AGFUND, the World Bank and other partners has now produced a resource book in Arabic, the first of its kind, which MENA cities can now view as a guide to becoming a more child friendly city. Moreover, additional strategies have been developed this year for five other cities in MENA to help them become CFCs: Tripoli, Aleppo, Sana'a, Khartoum, and Amman. Two regional training sessions, in Amman and Aleppo, were also conducted for officials from the municipalities and the local authorities in order to raise the level of awareness and introduce the concept of CFC and its application.

What were some of the findings of the 2007 CPI World Bank evaluation?

The World Bank evaluation of the MENA CPI documented the significant number of positive effects of MENA CPI activities in the cities in the MENA region, as well as the role that the CPI played in changing the perception of the mayors on the issue of children and youth and their role in addressing these issues. The evaluation also recommended that the CPI activities be expanded and scaled up in the region. AUDI is pleased with the results of the CPI and looks forward to further engagement with the Bank.

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