



NETWORKING FOR THE FUTURE | الترابط من أجل المستقبل

## COMMUNICATION & VISIBILITY PLAN FOR

JDEIDET EL CHOUF, LEBANON



This publication, or parts of it, may be reproduced provided that source is quoted, and that such reproduction is for non-commercial use.

This publication has been produced with funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation (SIDA) based on discussions with the Municipality of Jdeidet El Chouf, Lebanon. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the MINARET project and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the Swedish International Development Cooperation (SIDA).

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE PROJECT
2. METHODOLOGY
3. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY PLAN FOR JDEIDET EL CHOUF MUNICIPALITY
  - a. Existing Communication Structure
  - b. Goals and Objectives
  - c. Target Groups and Specific Objectives
  - d. Main Communication Tools
  - e. Communication Activities
  - f. Challenges and Opportunities
  - g. Monitoring and Evaluation
4. RECOMMENDATIONS

## INTRODUCTION

The development of Communication and Visibility Plans for the municipalities falls under component 2 of the project document, namely “Communication and Networking at Local and Regional Levels.” The framework of the communication plans was developed in close cooperation and coordination with the municipalities. Their buy-in was critical to developing a live document based on the communication opportunities and infrastructure in place, the challenges, the limitations, municipalities’ aspirations and sustainability. The framework was then customized for each municipality based on its unique set of challenges and opportunities. Each localized Communication and Visibility Plan sets up approaches and tools required to keep all stakeholders properly engaged and informed and to ensure their visibility.

### **Communication objectives:**

- Support targeted municipalities with capacity building in their communication efforts; help them increase awareness about the project and become strong advocates of the MINARET project in their communities.
- Assist municipalities to establish a local knowledge-sharing mechanism to exchange information, experience and lessons learned.
- Support municipalities to engage with the MINARET collaborative information-sharing platform and website to enhance communication and share policies, practices, experiences and expertise between municipalities and communities throughout the region.
- Ensure timely and effective communication with relevant stakeholders about project activities.
- Support positive behavioural change towards key components of the project by promoting bottom-up change in targeted communities.
- Raise awareness about 5 main SDGs as outlined in the MINARET project’s objectives.
- Promote inter-municipal regional cooperation to enhance good governance and share knowledge and skills.
- Encourage and facilitate communication activities and outputs that will showcase the donor.

Using a local, bottom-up approach, the communication plans will identify and prioritize key audiences and target groups in terms of relevance, contribution, decision-making, level of involvement, etc. A list of beneficiary institutions will be taken from the stakeholder’s assessment, which the partners previously conducted. Other cross-cutting issues will be identified and addressed in the plan, such as gender mainstreaming, economic opportunities, private-public partnerships and networking.

Joint communication activities will be coordinated in line with MINARET’s strategic communication directions and

its branding toolkit.

Specifically, the purpose of this Communication and Visibility Plan for Jdeidet El Chouf municipality is to ensure proper and valuable communication about MINARET in Lebanon, in the region and worldwide, where and when possible, by informing stakeholders and the public about the impact of the project. Thus, the project relies on successful internal and external communications. The plan also intends to build the municipality's capacities by suggesting actions needed to empower staff and equip them with the necessary skills to showcase MINARET and the municipality's work.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE PROJECT**

The "MENA Region Initiative as a Model of NEXUS Approach and Renewable Energy Technologies (MINARET)" aims to address the MENA region's unique sustainability challenges and opportunities by using the synergies between renewable energy technology and efficiency, water management and food security to increase local and regional sustainability capacities. The four-year project kicked off in the first quarter of 2017 and is operating in Jordan, Tunisia and Lebanon.

The MINARET project intends to build the municipality's resilience to climate change by adopting renewable energy resources, energy efficiency practices, water management techniques and food security. This is in addition to strengthening the institutional capacities of relevant governmental authorities involved in the project by promoting policy dialogue, implementing capacity building programmes as well as promoting inter-municipal regional cooperation to enhance good governance. The project also seeks to reinforce the roles of women, youth and marginalized groups by developing and implementing the NEXUS approach. The last objective of the project is to develop a MENA website and the online dialogue platform that focuses on knowledge-sharing, education and lessons learned at the national and regional policy levels. In addition to developing communication and visibility plans for the municipalities.

The NEXUS theory is that water, energy and food security can be achieved on a global level through the integration, management and governance of the three sectors.

The project partners include the Royal Scientific Society/National Energy Research Center (RSS/NERC), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Future Pioneers for Empowering Communities (FPEC). The project will be implemented through Sahab and Al Karak municipalities in Jordan, Jdeidet El Chouf in Lebanon and Monastir in Tunisia.

The project, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation (SIDA), is aligned with its strategy and goals of an improved environment, a reduced climate impact and increased resilience to environmental impacts, climate change and natural disasters. The project also embraces five of the UN Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 5-Gender equality; SDG 6-Water; SDG 7-Affordable and clean energy; SDG 11-Sustainable cities and communities; and SDG 13-Climate action.

## METHODOLOGY

This Communication and Visibility Plan was developed in close consultation and coordination with the key staff of the Jdeidet El Chouf municipality, including the Mayor and the staff nominated by the Mayor, to take part in the consultation process, namely:

- Mr. Hisham Fatayri, the Mayor
- Ms. Dunia Fatayri, MINARET Focal Point
- Mr. Ayman Sharafeldeen, Municipal Council Member and Head of the Media and Culture Committee

The consultation meetings were conducted over two days at the municipality offices both in group and individual meetings. The discussions were supported by official documents and correspondences.

## COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY PLAN FOR JDEIDET EL CHOUF MUNICIPALITY

### A. Existing Communication Structure

The Jdeidet El Chouf municipal organizational structure reflects a top-to-bottom communication style. The municipality is a relatively small one and is headed by the Mayor and employs three staff members on fixed term contracts. Labourers are appointed on a daily paid basis.

The Mayor and the municipal council are elected every four years. The municipal council is composed of nine members elected by less than 10,000 citizens. The municipality serves around 22,000 people, most

of whom are not represented in the municipal council as they are not on the voting lists. The municipal council represents only 7% of the people living under the municipality's jurisdiction. This discrepancy between the actual population served by the municipality and the eligible voting population, which resulted in fewer seats in the council, adversely affected the financial subsidies received from the government. Therefore, the municipality has to rely on other sources of income to close the gap in the municipality's budget, such as services fees and contributions from the local community and the private sector. The Mayor and the municipal council are not paid salaries; however, the Mayor receives modest privileges.

Besides the municipal council, there are five neighbourhood committees that are elected every year. Each committee is comprised of ten people. These committees represent the citizens living in their respective neighbourhoods and work with the municipality on different kinds of issues that concern the citizens.

The establishment of the committees is the Mayor's initiative and is not reflected in the municipality's by-law. Three years ago, with funding from the European Union, a network of municipal committees was established and relevant by-laws were produced. However, this network, which can provide a knowledge-sharing and visibility platform for MINARET, is not as active as it should be.

With regard to the decision-making process, the Mayor, after consulting with the municipal council, issues instructions and makes decisions concerning the municipality's operations. However, the actual work of the municipality and the logic behind the decision made were not adequately communicated to the staff or the general public, which resulted in more complaints made by citizens who were not satisfied with the services provided by the municipality. As for the staff, since there are so few and they are overloaded with work, certain municipal council members are forced to help with the municipality's operations to compensate for the shortage of staff.

There is currently no communication about municipal news within the municipality, i.e no newsletter, no official website, no official email, no regular social interaction/networking, etc. However, the municipality has a page on Facebook to share news with the public and the municipal council also created a group on WhatsApp to share information.

The communication between the municipality and the general public is not systematic or structured. The municipal council meets once a month. They take the decisions collectively. The members of the municipal council communicate with citizens and the neighbourhood committees directly to learn their needs and communicate these needs during the council's meetings. The council has a work plan based on citizen's needs. The municipality uses a Public Address System to announce news of general public interest every morning; they also broadcast news, such as deaths, specialists who sporadically visit the health centre to treat patients, etc., as necessary throughout the day.

As for the non-governmental organizations, the municipality initiated the "NGOs' Union," which is comprised of four non-political NGOs, in order to enhance communication among them to be able to provide targeted and coordinated services to the local community. In 2018, the municipality plans to evaluate the Union's performance in terms of its sustainability, activities, opportunities and challenges.

## **B. Objective and Goals**

As a result of the meetings and discussions with municipality staff, it was decided that Jdeidet El Chouf should have a developed work plan in place to direct communications and help the team meet its objectives and goals. The work plan is based on the following:

→ **Objective 1:** Establish a baseline for communication activities.

**Goal 1:** The municipality begins a structured communications campaign to share information within the municipality itself, with the municipal council and the neighbourhood committees.

**Goal 2:** The municipality begins a structured communications campaign to share information with the general public, including NGOs.

**Goal 3:** The municipality encourages the general public to submit suggestions.

For Goals 1, 2 and 3, the municipality should begin by making a 12-month Communication Activity Plan. Then as this plan is implemented, the goals are carefully tracked for the duration of the plan. This tracked data becomes the baseline to which all future data will be compared.

Reaching goal 1, "the municipality begins a structured communications campaign to share information within the municipality itself, with the municipal council and the neighbourhood committees," entails

opening the channels of communication within the municipality, including the municipal council. This is particularly important as the municipality is relatively small in size which makes the staff feel overburdened; they are implementing their daily work with no space to celebrate their successes and to communicate on a more strategic level. Reaching this goal will also render the municipal council and the neighbourhood committees more active by ensuring their complete engagement and involvement in setting the communication plans as well as implementing them side by side with the municipality.

The municipality could produce a regular internal newsletter highlighting achievements and challenges, sharing news about current and upcoming projects. This newsletter can be shared on the Facebook page to share news with the public as well.

Goal 2, “the municipality begins a structured communications campaign to share information with the general public,” could set the basis for a more structured and systematic communication style with the public. The municipality could begin by asking the public for the best method to communicate, i.e. monthly open meetings or quarterly newsletters to share information, on social media platforms. The first step to getting the public involved is to tell them that the municipality will be issuing news updates along with how and when these updates will be released. The municipality needs to be sure to uphold this schedule and also track outgoing communications: the messages delivered and the frequency with which they are released.

Goal 3, “the municipality encourages the general public to submit suggestions,” states that the municipality may choose to create a website/encourage the public to communicate on the Facebook page /utilize a suggestion box at the meetings to collect suggestions from the public. These suggestions should be logged and recorded. The system for citizens to submit their suggestions should be a simple one, and the public should be aware that their suggestions are welcome and encouraged.

→ **Objective 2:** Develop annual communication plans.

**Goal 1:** The municipality begins a process of developing annual communication plans with indicators concerning external and internal communication, visibility events and fundraising opportunities.

**Goal 2:** The municipality develops the communication plans in close consultation with the municipal council and staff.



**Goal 3:** The municipality communicates the plan to the general public and gets their feedback.

Objective 2 advocates for creating a structured process that brings all stakeholders on board. The consultation mechanism to be adopted throughout the process will provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to be involved and create a sense of ownership. The mechanism will also give the municipality the chance to assess resource allocation based on needs and priorities.

The annual communication plans intend to design a road map for the mayor, municipal council and staff concerning the primary messages, activities, opportunities and communications required to improve synergies among stakeholders. Coordinated messages are a vital component for any successful communication effort to synchronize messages and avoid any lapses or overlaps.

For goals 1 and 2, “the municipality begins a process of developing annual communication plans with indicators that include external and internal communication, visibility events and fundraising opportunities” and “the municipality develops the communication plans in close consultation with the municipal councils and staff,” the municipality will ensure that all stakeholders are involved in this interactive process. Staff will play an important part in identifying needs, setting priorities, designing showcase events and identifying potential fundraising opportunities. Including all staff in this process boosts morale and creates a sense of excitement throughout the municipality.

The municipality will also reach out to the private sector at the national level and other funding organizations at the regional and international levels. This is to expand the municipality’s donor base and diversify funding opportunities. The communication style of the municipality, among other important factors, can increase its potential to compete for project funding. The networking provided by the MINARET project is highly likely to establish and expand the municipality’s connections and improve the municipality’s chances of securing new funding sources.

**C. Target Groups and Specific Objectives**

<b>Target group</b>	<b>Specific communication objectives</b>
General public	Raise public awareness of MINARET and the project’s objectives.

Staff	Keep staff informed of the progress of this project and others that are implemented at the municipality.
Government departments	Ensure proper and timely communication about the project to avoid any delays that might occur and adversely affect the implementation of the project.
Media	Keep the media engaged throughout the lifespan of the project for visibility purposes.
NGOs	Keep constant and informed communication with the NGOs' Union and initiate and establish working relationships with other NGOs.

**D. Main Communication Tools**

There are many communication tools that the project can utilize to share information with the general public, such as:

- Advertisements in public places and municipality offices
  - Billboards on busy roads
  - Posters
  - Flyers on bulletin boards
- Jdeidet El Chouf International Festival will showcase MINARET and NEXUS
- Radio and press
- The annual marathon organized by an NGO
- The municipality Facebook page

The communication tools inside the municipality include official correspondence in the form of instructions, official letters, telephone calls, one-on-one meetings, scheduled meetings and ad hoc meetings.

**E. Communication Activities**

Recurring communication activities are required to effectively disseminate information with stakeholders and the public concerning MINARET.

- It was agreed that the municipality will start the process of joining the Covenant of Mayors. The municipality will need support throughout the process from MINARET project partners, such as NERC, which is leading the process.
- The Green Club and Ambassador of Change initiatives will be launched in 2018. These programs offer support to help ensure that schools joining the International Green Initiative will be facilitated by MINARET project's partner, Future Pioneers for Empowering Communities (FPEC).
- The Jdeidet El Chouf municipality will have a space on the collaborative platform established specifically to increase dialogue among MINARET stakeholders. The municipality's project-related news will be posted on the MINARET website as well.
- The branding toolkit for the MINARET project will be shared with the municipality to ensure that all communications within and about the project will showcase donors and partners of MINARET and NEXUS.
- The MINARET First Regional Learning and Exchange Event will provide an opportunity for the municipal staff to connect and network with other stakeholders and experts attending the event and the workshops.

#### **F. Challenges and Opportunities**

##### Challenges:

- Lack of regular and structured awareness-raising campaigns
- Some civil society organizations and NGOs are not supportive of the municipality's activities
- Lack of human and financial resources
- No evaluation and assessment system
- Lack of promotional materials for Jdeidet El Chouf

##### Opportunities

- Awareness-raising events
- Information and promotional material, such as a drone video
- Website
- Press and Media (interviews and PRs)
- Social media (Facebook)
- Exchange of knowledge and information
  - Within the municipality

- With the general public
- With other municipalities
- With the private sector
- Workshops and annual meetings
- Satisfaction surveys

## **G. Monitoring and Evaluation**

At present, many, if not all, MINARET initiatives in Jdeidet El Chouf are in the very early stages. This is an exciting time because every success can be celebrated as a success that wasn't seen prior to MINARET.

Before benchmarking can begin to assess current progress in communication and social media, municipality visibility, public engagement, etc. against that of the past, Jdeidet El Chouf needs to begin monitoring its programs, projects and all associated activities to establish a baseline.

### **Why Jdeidet El Chouf should monitor its activities:**

- Having past data would help Jdeidet El Chouf assess its current situation.
- If an ongoing project isn't working as well as expected, a monitoring system could identify the shortcoming and the team could take prompt corrective action.
- It's extremely useful to take past learnings and apply them when planning future activities.
- Collected data can be used to compare municipalities to each other.
- Collected data can be used to mobilize support of other municipalities to influence the decision-making process at the governmental level.

After the monitoring process, Jdeidet El Chouf will be armed with the information it needs to evaluate its efforts. Did the program or project achieve desired results? Why or why not? The evaluation process can only be completed with the data that comes from monitoring. Without either of these processes, teams cannot possibly be sure if their projects were successful or why.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The current communication structure of the municipality poses some challenges in terms of designing and implementing successful communication activities. The lack of human and financial resources and the non-structured and non-systematic communication with the public could compromise the success of communications activities and efforts. Nevertheless, the municipality is small, which makes communication within the municipality much easier and direct. Structurally speaking, it is a strict top-to-bottom communication approach. In reality, the communication door between the Mayor and staff is always open, but the financial and staffing challenges make it difficult to communicate constructively and strategically. Communication is primarily based on day-to-day operations.

Therefore, it is important to provide staff with training on strategic communication, fundraising and outreach, all of which would ensure that these principles are incorporated into every applicable communication activity or event that the municipality initiates.

A quarterly newsletter (in printed form or ideally, an e-newsletter) could be a good medium to communicate within the municipality to inform staff about success, challenges and progress made.. The newsletter can also be shared with the municipal council and the public by posting it on the Facebook page.

The only member in the municipality's Media and Cultural Committee who is active is its head. The municipality could utilize the remaining committee members to ensure effective, efficient, and periodic communication to increase visibility, foster communication with the public and improve their feedback about the municipality's activities.

The municipality's small size encourages the timely delivery of news, work instructions and response to public concerns and demands, but the lack of resources resulting from the small size of the municipality could seriously compromise the municipality's efficiency, service delivery, visibility and communication with the public. Therefore, it is vital that the municipality looks for additional sources of funding for longer project periods. (Jdeidet El Chouf is situated in an area that can be marketed for tourists. The municipality may agree with governmental tourism departments and agents and initiate programmes that encourage tourists to visit the El Chouf area. They may design tourism packages that could be

coordinated by the municipality in exchange for a certain amount of money. This will also increase the visibility of the municipality's achievements and mobilize public support in some areas).